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THE COLONIAL ART OF LATIN AMERICA

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PREPARED BY ROBERT C. SMITH

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In preparing this teaching set the compiler had the assistance of an advisory committee composed of Mr. Victor d'Amico and Mr. René d'Harnoncourt of the Museum of Modern Art, Professor George Kubler of Yale University, Dr. Grace McCann Morley, Director of the San Francisco Museum of Art, and Professor Elise Ruffini of Columbia University.

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Introduction

THE COLONIAL ART OF LATIN AMERICA, like the pre-Columbian art that went before it and the subsequent productions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has only recently become a subject for serious study. This is largely because art history is itself a recent study and its fields still to be explored are large and many. Of these the accomplishment of colonial architects and craftsmen in Spanish and Portuguese America is by no means the least both in geographical extent or in period of production. Their works fill a vast territory from New Mexico, California and Florida to Argentina and Chile, almost three-quarters of a hemisphere. They worked for three centuries without interruption in a series of styles so closely related in their dependence upon the contemporary trends of Europe as to be considered one general manner of expression.

In 1496 Bartholomew Columbus, the brother of the great admiral, founded the city of Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola. By 1511 the Spaniards had begun to colonize Cuba and two years later Balboa and his men reached the Pacific. Hernán Cortés took Mexico in 1521 and shortly thereafter the royal authority was established in Central America. The first Spanish settlement in Colombia was made in 1525; the first Venezuelan town of Coro was founded in 1527. Quito, the capital of Ecuador, was founded in 1534; Lima, Peru, in 1535; Asunción, Paraguay, in 1537; Sucre, Bolivia, in 1539; and Santiago de Chile in 1541. By 1549, when Salvador, the old capital of Brazil, was established by Tomé de Sousa, almost all the present cities of Spanish America had been created and were being laid out according to a code provided by the government.

We know the rules of these Laws of the Indies, the straight streets intersecting at right angles on a flat area, the great squares that were prescribed with the principal public buildings and churches grouped

around them, the city walls and fortifications. But even with the aid of the earliest maps and drawings it is practically impossible to visualize the first towns of Latin America because, unlike the cities of Europe, many of which since the sixteenth century have retained their original appearance, those of Spanish and Portuguese America have grown and changed their forms with each succeeding century. The earliest structures have disappeared because they were provisional constructions of impermanent materials that soon had to be replaced, and because as the cities expanded they demanded buildings on a grander scale. In some places, however, buildings survive to prove that by 1520 in the Dominican Republic, by 1550 in Mexico, and by the end of the century in Peru, monumental architecture had been achieved.

From these beginnings until 1820, approximately three centuries, Latin American art continued to develop. It was natural that in its growth it should follow closely the styles that were current in Spain and Portugal because Latin American art at this time was colonial art and the art of colonies like the life led in colonies has always been dominated by the patterns established in the mother countries. Especially was this true of Spanish and Portuguese America where the trade of the colonies was so jealously supervised by the home authorities and the conditions of climate and geography which the settlers encountered were so frequently similar to what they had known in the Iberian peninsula. In Spanish America it was forbidden to produce wine and olive oil and to trade with any European merchants except those of Spain. In Brazil no books could be printed and silversmiths could not exercise their craft. All this was done to protect the industries of the mother countries. As a result what came to colonial Latin America from the outside world came to it with few exceptions through the channel of Spain and Portugal. The landscape had its influence

as well, for the valley of Mexico, the plateaux of Colombia and Peru, the lowlands of the Rio de la Plata, the tropical islands of the Antilles, and the great harbors of the Brazilian coast were constant reminders of similar things in Spain and Portugal. It was natural for these places to be called New Spain, New Granada, New Andalusia and for colonial towns like Taxco, Tunja, Trinidad, Quito, and Ouro Preto¹ to be so constructed that they are practically indistinguishable from Iberian towns of the period.

Although for want of accurate documentation it is still dangerous to speak in general terms about Latin American colonial architecture, it seems safe to establish five distinct stylistic periods during the three centuries of its development.

(1) The first of these is the period from 1520 to 1560, when the transition from late Gothic to Renaissance forms, which had taken place in Spain and Portugal at the close of the fifteenth and the first years of the sixteenth century, was reflected in America.

(2) From 1560 until approximately 1650 the Renaissance style and in particular that special Spanish form of it which had been developed for Philip II by the architect Juan de Herrera prevailed in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies.

(3) This was followed from 1650 to 1750 by a century of the baroque, that style of curving lines, dynamic forms, and original inventions which had already changed the architecture of Spain and Portugal.

(4) During the decades of 1750 to 1770 the American baroque reached its height in a series of new and brilliant expressions in Mexico and in Brazil and was transformed into a semblance of the European rococo.

(5) From 1770 to 1820 there came the inevitable reaction from the rich complications of this style through the importation of neo-classicism favored by the official academies established in Spain and in the colonies. During this period through these academies a new control from Spain and Portugal was established over the architecture of the American empires and plans and architects came in greater quantities than ever before from Madrid and Lisbon to the new world.

It is wrong to speak of Latin American colonial art and architecture as though it were all a single unit. There is, it is true, a superficial resemblance produced by the use over the whole wide area of a common Iberian vocabulary. But within the territories of the two empires local conditions produced widely differing regional developments. To understand the accomplishment of Latin American colonial craftsmen we must separate the area into a series of creative centers. To begin the catalogue there is Santo Domingo, the first nucleus of architectural activity, whose early fortifications and primitive buildings created a formula of austere simplicity that dominated to a certain degree the Caribbean region and the port cities of the Gulf of Mexico during the whole colonial period. Then there was Mexico, where the amount of artistic production, in architecture, painting and in the minor arts, exceeds that of all other regions. This accomplishment is explained by the large corps of trained native craftsmen that made great undertakings possible, and the political pre-eminence of the viceroyalty of New Spain. Central America, especially in its inland centers, preserved a provincial relationship to Mexico through which the style of the metropolis was simplified to meet local conditions. In the schools of Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador, isolated theatres of colonial art, Spanish models were followed with special faithfulness. Quito itself had connections with Peru, that other great Spanish viceroyalty, where conditions similar to those in Mexico produced similar results in quantity, scale, richness, and invention. In Peru, even more than in the less extensive territory of New Spain, it is possible to define local centers whose styles were distinct. There is Lima, where as in

¹ These towns are in Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, and Brazil respectively. For descriptions and illustrations of them see: Toussaint, Manuel. *Taxco, México*, D. F., Editorial Cultura, 1931; Dorta, Enrique. *México. La arquitectura del renacimiento en Tunja*. *En Revista de Indias (Madrid)* 1942, no. 9; 1-51; Serpa, Enrique. *Días de Trinidad. Habana*, Álvarez Pina, 1939; Navarro, José Gabriel. *Quito. En Bulletin of the Pan American Union (Washington)* Sept. 1934, v. 48, no. 9; 617-630; Sousa-Leão Filho, Joaquim de. *Ouro Preto, Brazil. En Bulletin of the Pan American Union (Washington)* Sept. 1934, v. 48, no. 12; 623-632.

Quito and some of the Colombian towns, Moorish influence was strongly felt. There is Cuzco, celebrated among other things for its Indianizing painting, and the important architectural area of southern Peru and Bolivia, whose influence extended into Chile and northern Argentina. The Jesuits in Paraguay had their own architectural world, where the international complexion of the community brought Italian and central European ideas into play and these were felt to a degree in Argentina and southern Brazil. Finally, there was the rest of Brazil, Portuguese rather than Spanish, which, in spite of being the largest political unit in Latin America, created and preserved a singularly homogeneous style.

Throughout these varied regions there are innumerable buildings, paintings and sculpture which might easily be mistaken for similar monuments in Madrid, Seville, Barcelona, Oporto or Lisbon or any other Iberian community. That is the fruit of the colonial experience. But on the other hand, it cannot be denied that Latin American colonial architects and craftsmen did create something of their own, either by carrying further tendencies already initiated in Spain or Portugal, or modifying through indigenous decoration the basic Iberian forms. The New England colonists in their houses and churches evolved a style of clapboard architecture unlike anything in England. The Pennsylvanians created a distinctive version of Georgian domestic architecture by using their local field stone both for country barns and city dwellings. At Charleston, South Carolina, the basically British façades of many of the great houses were Americanized by the addition of open galleries, where in the summer the breezes from the sea could be enjoyed. In these cases either special climatic conditions or materials locally available were responsible for the changes.

Some of the innovations of colonial Latin American art can be directly attributed to the predominance of the Indian in the life of certain regions. Examples of these developments are the sixteenth century open chapels for Indians in Mexico, the use of Indian ornament and human forms in the architectural sculpture of Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia, and in the painting of the Andean region.

These things are discussed in the text which follows. But the presence of a large and skillful body of native craftsmen in the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru does not explain the other outstanding inventions. We cannot prove that the remarkable application of brilliant local tiles on the exteriors of Puebla churches derives from the Indian's love of bright colors. The development of the ultrabaroque church façades and interior retables of Mexico is no more the outgrowth of latent Aztec tendencies than the heavy proportions of the eighteenth century architecture of Lima are the product of Inca traditions. The round towers and delicately sculptured church portals of Minas Gerais in Brazil are not to be explained by the fact that Aleijadinho and some of his helpers were mulattoes. In reality there is no explanation for these varied phenomena other than that they are the perfectly unpredictable outcome of human development. Wherever people become effectively separated for a long enough time from their original environment, as the Latin Americans were separated from Spain and Portugal, there are bound to be changes in their language and in their art. The artistic innovations of Mexico, Peru and Brazil are to Iberian art what the modern accent of the Rio de la Plata, the localisms of Colombia or Chile or the vocabulary of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are to the Spanish and Portuguese languages.

Much of the colonial art of Latin America is anonymous. To be sure, we still know very little about it, for we are only on the threshold of serious archival study. As these researches continue to reveal dates of construction and details of commissions which help to determine the growth of styles, a great many new names of architects and other craftsmen will probably become known. But to know the name of an architect and little or nothing about him, which is largely the case at present, is hardly better than to know nothing at all. In this sense the early church builders of Latin America are like the architects of the medieval cathedrals of Europe. Not before the fifteenth century in Italy, Spain and Portugal and the other countries of Europe does any sizeable company of craftsmen emerge about whom we possess enough information to make them real per-

sonalities. In Latin America it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that a comparable situation obtained. The first architects who came out from Spain and Portugal to work in the colonies are shadowy figures in spite of the efforts of scholars to reconstruct their careers. Rodrigo de Liendo is known from documents to have built churches in Santo Domingo. The great Spanish architect Francisco Becerra is known to have worked in Mexico and then moved on to Ecuador and Peru.² The name of Luis Dias is associated with early buildings in Brazil.³ Philip II's military engineer Juan Bautista Antonelli is the only sixteenth century Spanish architect whose movements in America can be traced in detail and his work on the fortifications of the Caribbean has survived him.⁴ In the seventeenth century, outside of Peru, we have only the names of master builders, the successors of the monastic craftsmen of the preceding period, and their biographies are not carefully recorded. This is true also of the contemporary painters, the Echaves and the Juárez's of Mexico, the Figueroas and Gregorio Vásquez of Colombia, Miguel de Santiago and Goribar of Ecuador and the sculptors like Alonso de la Paz and Quirio Cataño of Antigua or José Olmos and Manuel Caspicara of Quito. We are fortunate when we know when and where they were born or died or can discover a signed and dated work. Even in the 18th century such well documented figures as Juan Bautista Primoli, Joaquín Toesca y Richi, and Manuel Tolsá⁵ are exceptions to the general rule. Added to the mysteries of Latin American art are the many paintings, statues and pieces of furniture that cannot yet be classified as European or American. Were they exported to the new world or were they made here is a question which in all too many cases must be left unanswered.

²Docto, Enrique Marco. *Arquitectura colonial: Francisco Becerra*. In *Archivo español de arte* (Madrid) 1943, no. 55: 7-15. Harthman, Emilio. *Francisco Becerra, maestro de arquitectura*. In *Comercio (Lima)* Jan. 2, 1945: 19 and 222.

³Andrade, Rodrigo de São Paulo de. *O decano de nossos arquitetos*. In *Machado (Rio de Janeiro)* Oct. 27, 1943.

⁴Angelo Liguori, Diego. *Bautista Antonelli: Las fortificaciones del siglo XVI*. Madrid, Espasa e Calpe, 1942.

⁵The first of these architects worked in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil; the second in Chile; the third in Mexico.

In many respects the same problems exist in relation to our own colonial art. Here as well as there a lack of records constantly hinders the student and impedes his understanding of what was accomplished.

How does the colonial art of Latin America compare with that of this country? They have one thing in common, the colonial status. But beyond that there is no further relationship; they were two isolated spheres without contact. And there is one overwhelming difference. The Church in Latin America was the great patron of art, as it was in Spain and Portugal. But British America had almost no religious art, for the Puritans of New England, the Quakers of Pennsylvania, and the Low Churchmen of the south had no need for "images." The private patron took the place of the Church, the sculpture and painting suffered from the simple taste of the colonists. On the other hand more attention was paid here to the interior of the home with the result that the eighteenth century town and country houses of Latin America were with few exceptions considerably less comfortable than the carefully equipped dwellings of many of the Anglo-American colonists. This difference applied also to the mother countries. English eighteenth century travelers were constantly surprised by the ostentation without comfort which they found in their visits to Spanish and Portuguese houses.

In spite of the restrictions of imports and trade which the home government imposed in the Latin American colonies, the Church provided a degree of internationalism which was lacking in the art of the British colonies. Through it came the unbroken contact with Italy which so greatly enriched the art of Latin America from the first frescoes of sixteenth century Mexico to the innovations of the Italian Jesuit architects of the eighteenth century. The final difference and perhaps the most important, is the fact that in Latin America but not in British America the influence of Indian craftsmanship was felt; if not universally at least in some of the principal centers of production. In this Indian contribution the colonial art of Latin America possesses a link with the great American art which had preceded it and a tradition which endures to the present.

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40. HEAD OF A SPANISH SAINT. *Museo de la catedral, Mexico City*
41. VIRGIN OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. *Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, N. Y.*
42. CHOIRSTALLS FROM THE MONASTERY OF SAN FRANCISCO, LIMA, PERU. *Hispanic Society of America, New York City*
43. DETAIL OF A CARVED BEDSTEAD. *Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

CIUDAD TRUJILLO. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (HISPANIOLA)

Interior of the Cathedral

1

1521

THE CATHEDRAL of Ciudad Trujillo was the first monumental cathedral erected by the Spaniards in the new world. Like many colonial buildings in Latin America it was not the first structure on the site. Shortly after the coming of Columbus to Hispaniola in 1492, the first cathedral was constructed of "sticks, sod and weak material, of boards and mud, held together like a plant which a gardener has tied up". This is how the second bishop, Alejandro Geraldini, described it in a letter to the Spanish authorities, adding that it was in constant peril from "witches, necromancers, and fanatics" who might at any time set fire to it.¹

The bishop's prayer for a new cathedral was heard and in 1510 a contract was signed in Spain for Alonzo Rodríguez, who four years before had completed the cathedral of Seville, to build it.² There is no record, however, that Rodríguez either submitted a plan or came to Santo Domingo. The first stone was laid March 25, 1521. After the death of the bishop in 1523, the work was continued under the dean, Rodrigo de Bastidas, and the archbishop, Don Alonzo de Fuenmayor, until on August 31, 1541 it was almost completed.³

Who was the architect of the cathedral? Like so many colonial craftsmen of Latin America, he is still anonymous. When documents were discovered proving that a Spanish architect, Rodrigo de Liendo, of whom little is known, had worked from 1525 to 1555 on two churches in Columbus' island it was suggested that he might have built the cathedral. More recently, however, this has been denied on the basis that the style of the cathedral is very different from that of Liendo's churches of San Francisco and La Merced.⁴ This much is agreed, that whoever designed the west façade of the cathedral of Ciudad Trujillo must have known the work of Diego de Siloe at the cathedral of Granada in Spain, so similar are they in arrangement.⁵

But there is a deeper similarity. That of Granada is a building of transition between the architecture of the middle ages and the Renaissance. Started in one style it was finished in another. The roughly contemporary American cathedral had the same stylistic transformation in mid-course. The interior was completed on a three-aisled Gothic plan, while the façade is a definite attempt to imitate the Spanish copies of Italian Renaissance models.

The interior of the cathedral of Ciudad Trujillo is the first and almost the last example in the new world of true medieval architecture.⁶ The plan shows a nave of 8 bays without clerestory or transepts, 100 feet wide by 150 in length. The central vault, which is unusually broad for its height, is not a true ribbed vault but rather a barrel vault with penetrations over which are laid inter-lacing ornamental ribs. The aisle vaults, on the other hand, are quadripartite of normal size. A recent study has brought out analogies between this plan and that of the cathedral of Palma de Mallorca in Spain. This resemblance in arrangement may indicate that the architect of the interior of the cathedral of Ciudad Trujillo was a Catalan.⁷

NOTES

¹ ALEMAR, LUIS E. *La catedral de Santo Domingo*. Barcelona, Casa editorial Araluce, 1933, p. 11.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ PALM, ERWIN WALTER. Rodrigo de Liendo, arquitecto en la Española. *Publicaciones de la Universidad de Santo Domingo*, v. 28. Ciudad Trujillo, Editorial La Nación, 1944, p. 9.

⁵ Palm, *op. cit.* p. 9. Wethey, Harold E. Early works of Bartolomé Ordóñez and Diego de Siloe. *In* *Art Bulletin* (Chicago) Dec. 1943, v. 25, no. 4: 344. The cathedral of Granada was begun as a Gothic building March 25, 1523, by Enrique de Egas. In 1525 Diego de Siloe, who died in 1533, was placed in charge of its construction.

⁶ There are a few examples of sixteenth century Gothic vaulting in Mexico, Peru, and Puerto Rico.

⁷ WATERMAN, THOMAS T. The Gothic architecture of Santo Domingo. *In* *Bulletin of the Pan American Union* (Washington) June 1943, v. 76, no. 6: 322-323.

CIUDAD TRUJILLO. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (HISPANIOLA)

Exterior of the Cathedral

1541

2

THE GREAT PORTAL of the first American cathedral, which forms the west façade and is the principal external adornment, is among the first important reflections in the Spanish American colonies of the Spanish style called plateresque. This style, which Diego de Siloe had used at Granada, is a hybrid, combining elements of the old Gothic with the new classicism of the Renaissance, and owes its name, "of the silversmiths", to the lavishness of its surface ornament. The plateresque style is a product of the change which was coming into all aspects of Spanish art at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, when the Renaissance revival of Roman forms and decoration, which had developed in Italy, was brought to Spain either by Italian architects and artists or by Spaniards who had studied and worked in Italy. The growth of the new architecture in Spain was slow. The Renaissance ideas had to be applied gradually, often to buildings which had already been started in the old Gothic style, here a cornice, there a column, or a frieze. The sumptuous decoration which the Spaniards gave these transitional constructions is explained by that national love of complicated richly applied ornament which the Spanish inherited from the Moors. Stylistically this plateresque decoration is like the architecture, a blending of Gothic and Renaissance motives.

The portal of Ciudad Trujillo is a good example of these characteristics. Its frame is Renaissance, for the whole portal was conceived as a Roman triumphal arch, and there is a handsome cornice and frieze with pseudo-antique portrait medallions that recall the fifteenth century architecture of Lombardy in Italy and the sculpture of Diego de Siloe at the Golden Stairway in the cathedral of Burgos. This entablature is carried on imposing angle piers with fragments of classical architecture projecting between.

All this abundantly shows the influence of ancient architecture. But the arch itself presents a discrepancy, for there is still a double opening in the medieval fashion and the horizontal division is still preserved. The canopies over the niches strike the Gothic note. The old style has yielded much but not all its ground to the new. Finally the façade is filled with architectural ornament. The arches are coffered in reminiscence of Roman design and in their panels and on the shafts of the pilasters are complicated plateresque decorations. Heraldic symbols in low relief on the upper portions of the buttress-like piers are another plateresque feature, but one which is also found in the early Renaissance architecture of all of Europe at the time.

The cathedral of Ciudad Trujillo is a product of the great transition. Stylistically it is no longer Gothic but not yet fully Renaissance.

*Façade of the Church of the Augustinian Monastery**Circa 1550*

FROM the islands of the Antilles Spanish architecture moved with the armies and navies westward to Mexico. In the sixteenth century the great builders were the missionary orders, the Augustinian, Franciscan, and Dominican. Their churches and monastic buildings had to be handsome enough to attract the often highly civilized Indians, and strong enough to repel them when they occasionally attacked. By 1550, thirty years after Cortés' conquest, monastic architects with European experience and trained Indian laborers to help them were building all over Mexico structures that could stand comparison with what was being produced in Spain itself.

Such an architect was Fray Andrés de Mata who in 1550 undertook the construction of a great fortified establishment for the Augustinians at Actopan, to the north of Mexico City. The work was continued by a colleague, Fray Martín de Acebeido.

Fray Andrés had lived in Italy and worked there as a painter before coming to America. His background may to a certain degree account for the strange original design of the portal at Actopan, which, as in so many early colonial buildings, is the façade's principal attraction. This is full of Roman elements: the triumphal arch, the graduated coffers, reminiscent of the Pantheon, the columbarium-like niches used for decorative effect, the handsome plinths, boldly repeated in the case of the larger order. But the way these details are put together suggests a painter, rather than an architect and particularly an architect of Fray Andrés' time. Instead of one arch there are two, and one is set within the

other like a screen before a fireplace so that the principal arch is interrupted and supplanted by the smaller. The decorative niches and coffers are applied to the surfaces with more regard for the picturesque than the structural and the proportions of the orders are altered for dramatic effect. The outer elongated columns end in capitals that are too small for their shafts and the entablature in both arches shrinks to a mere band of decoration. It is as though Fray Andrés had actually carried out at Actopan one of those fanciful architectural designs which Renaissance painters invented from time to time for the background of their pictures.

Stylistically Actopan is more fully Renaissance than the façade of Ciudad Trujillo. In spite of the eccentric proportions, the elements of the design are now more nearly classical than those of the Dominican cathedral. But here at Actopan the plateresque quality is still strong, in the highly decorative colonnettes beside the façade window, in the many decorative medallions and in the concentration of ornament on one part of the façade. In the decade and a half between the completion of the Antillian cathedral and the beginning of this Mexican church Renaissance architecture had greatly developed in America.

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*Ruins of the Open Chapel**Middle of the Sixteenth Century*

A SPECIAL INVENTION of the monastic architecture of Mexico in the sixteenth century was the *capilla abierta* or open chapel. So large were their congregations of Indians that the missionary priests found it impossible to erect churches large enough to contain them all. The solution was the open chapel, open in the sense that one side had no wall, thus exposing the whole interior to view after the fashion of a stage or the shell at an outdoor band concert. The arrangement presented the double advantage of accommodating an almost unlimited congregation and at the same time providing a degree of permanence and protection to the sanctuary of the altar not available at the usual field mass.

Some of the open chapels were attached to the monastic churches. Others, like the one at Tlalmanalco, were separate structures. Of this only the sanctuary arch, the walls, and the façade arcade that originally carried a wooden roof are preserved. The construction is thought to have been completed between 1540 and 1560 but neither the history of the work or the name of the architect are known.¹ Since the monastery was Franciscan it is assumed that the builder was a member of that order.

The ruin at Tlalmanalco possesses some of the finest plateresque ornamental sculpture in Mexico. The forms of the decoration are generally Renaissance. But the six colonnettes that form the piers of the arcade and the lower part of the capitals recall the Gothic. Here, however, as so often happened in this transitional architecture, the upper part emerges with the characteristics of the composite order. There are a few Gothic pedestals and the grimacing heads which appear at intervals on the richly sculptured surfaces of the arches are still medieval in spirit. These decorations in which cherubs, targets, vases, garlands, and medallions are woven together, derive

from the famous "grotesques" of Italian Renaissance painting. One specially Roman note are the two fine busts just below the springing of two of the arches of the arcade which seem to be inspired by the portraits of an antique sarcophagus. Just above them is a death's head and human bones, a symbol which is constantly to reappear in Mexican art.

There is much that is purely Mexican in the Tlalmanalco sculpture. The sixteenth century chroniclers tell of how the Indians readily adapted their talents of building and decorating to the needs of their new religion. It was inevitable that such skilled craftsmen should bring something of their own expression to their work. At Tlalmanalco their influence is constantly apparent: in the bold patterns of vegetable forms of the sanctuary arch, in the immobile head at the keystone, and the figure of God within its stunted frame above. On the walls the undecipherable flying figures have Indian faces and their poses and accoutrements suggest nothing so much as Aztec winged deities. The character of the stone cutting is Mexican, not European. All the small figures that compose these decorations are carved with such precision and such sensitive detail that they make Tlalmanalco one of the first masterpieces of Latin American sculpture.

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¹ TOUSSAINT, MANUEL. Supervivencias góticas en la arquitectura mexicana. In *Archivo español de arte y arqueología* (Madrid) v. II, no. 31: 62.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Monastery of San Agustín Acolman, Mexico

Late Sixteenth Century

IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY Mexico there were monastic painters as well as sculptors and architects. A number of anonymous artists, some of whom had learned the fresco technique in Italy, decorated the walls of churches and monastery buildings.

The frescoes at the Augustinian foundation of Acolman are typical of the whole sixteenth century Mexican group. The fact that this monastery was completed in 1560 gives a possible *terminus ante quem* date for the paintings. They are located in an angle of the upper cloister and represent the Crucifixion and scenes from the Last Judgment. Painted in tones of gray, blue and green, they produce almost the subdued effect of a *grisaille* decoration.

The probable source of the artist's inspiration were the illustrated books which came to Mexico from Europe and which since 1539 had been published there also. These books contained woodcuts representing sacred scenes which were apparently used as patterns by the Mexican painters. This accounts for a certain stiffness in the Crucifixion figures and the prominent lines of their drapery. There is a flatness in the delineation of the figures and a lack of space in the picture which also show the influence of book illustrations. But this does not explain the finest thing about the fresco, the upturned head of

the kneeling Magdalen which strangely resembles the faces of the 15th century Umbrian painter, Luca Signorelli. The features of the standing St. John and his pose suggest the influence of late Gothic woodcuts from northern Europe, the source of many of the illustrations in contemporary books.

Around the Crucifixion panel and above it are bands of fresco ornament very similar to the sculptured "grotesques" at Tlalmanalco. There is still a contrast between the old architectural forms and the new, between the Renaissance ornament of the decorative painting and the still medieval columns of the frame.

The Mexican sixteenth century technique of fresco painting differs from the Italian technique of *buon fresco* in which all the painting was done on wet plaster and allowed to harden with the wall. In Mexico only the black outlines of certain forms and some minor portions were painted wet. The rest was applied *a secco* after the wall had dried. The colors themselves, fabricated in large measure from native plants like the magüey and nopal, are more opaque than those used in European frescoes.

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PUEBLA, MEXICO

Façade of the Cathedral

Circa 1556 to 1649

6

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY Mexican cathedrals are a prolongation in the new world of the old Spanish tradition of cathedral building. When the cathedrals of Mexico, Puebla, Mérida and Guadalajara were begun, the Spaniards at home were no longer erecting cathedrals on such a scale. As a result, these Mexican buildings, in size and in richness, are to a certain degree the successors of Burgos, León, and Seville.

Puebla is typical of the others. Closely related in plan and decoration to the cathedral of Mexico City, the present building is the second on the site. Although the names of two distinguished architects, Francisco Becerra and Juan Gómez de Mora, are associated with it in documents, there is no proof of who designed the cathedral or exactly when during the long history of its construction that design was applied.

The façade of Puebla is a wonderfully balanced composition. The cathedral towers are high enough to soar above the horizontal mass below, and the exciting vertical note they strike is repeated by the smaller towers and the two great buttresses of the main façade. To produce a rhythm of linear foci the ornament of the façade is concentrated in the upper towers and in the three triumphal arches with elaborate superstructures that rise between the but-

tresses. All the other surfaces, with only the slits of windows to interrupt their bareness, provide in true Spanish fashion an admirable foil for the decorated areas. The ornament is grand without being heavy—grand in proportion like the pilasters of the towers which are almost as high as the buttresses, and grand in its simplicity. So straight are the lines and so unbroken their courses that they suggest the influence of a geometrician with his compass and ruler. In reality it is the influence of Philip II's great architect, Juan de Herrera, who had introduced this kind of decoration and proportions at the monastery-palace of the Escorial near Madrid.

The façade of the cathedral of Puebla, like that of its larger sister in Mexico City, is in scale and in style vastly different from the cathedral of Ciudad Trujillo. It represents the culmination of Renaissance architecture in America because it states with the utmost clarity the principles of order and balance which the Renaissance had derived from the classical architecture of Rome. In the complicated but clear relationship of its facts to the whole it is a symbol also of the well organized structure of imperial administration in colonial America.

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Façade of the Church of San Francisco Acatepec
Early Eighteenth Century

AS THE seventeenth century advanced and during the eighteenth century the architecture of Mexico, like that of the other parts of the Spanish American empire, assumed an entirely new character. The churches and other buildings of this period are all inspired by the Spanish baroque. Within the framework of this style a number of interesting local innovations were developed in different parts of Mexico.

One of these was the custom in the region of Puebla of applying brightly colored glazed tiles to the surfaces of walls and niches and sometimes even to the whole façade of a building. These tiles, which are really maiolica,¹ had become since the late sixteenth century a principal industry of the town of Puebla and are still produced there. The use of tiles for decorative purposes is part of the Moorish heritage to the Iberian nations and through them to Latin America. Only in Brazil and at Puebla, however, have tiles been used to decorate a whole exterior.

The church of San Francisco Acatepec, between Puebla and Cholula, is one of the best preserved examples of the tile-covered baroque façade. No one yet knows when it was constructed or the name of the architect, but the style of the building indicates the early eighteenth century.

The façade of San Francisco Acatepec is typically baroque because it uses architectural forms to create a sense of lively movement. This is done by breaking the entablatures at frequent intervals and bending them arbitrarily to conform to the patterns of the shell-like ornament about the door and the flam-

boyant star of the pediment. The feeling of movement is accentuated by the liberties taken with the classical architectural forms. The shafts of columns and pilasters are divided into a series of new urn motives which are especially Mexican in their flavor; the conventional form of pediment is translated into a series of curves and volutes which are emphatically repeated in the twisted columns of the façade tower. But most effective of all, the whole façade curves inward so that all the lines, both round and straight, are made to seem to move by the fact of their concave orientation.

Over this bizarre structure are laid the red, blue, orange, and white tiles that form the final brilliant decoration. The effect they create is that of a great piece of painted china, like an enormous German porcelain stone. On the towers and the re-entrant angles of the façade tiles are combined with bricks, a practice which goes back to medieval Iranian architecture. This produces a more subdued richness, which contrasts handsomely with the lighter, more scintillating colors of the center of the façade. Reds and yellows predominate at San Francisco Acatepec; at nearby Santa María Tonanzintla blues and violets prevail.

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NOTE

¹ Earthenware glazed with oxide of tin and lead. The process was first used in Egypt and Persia. From there it was taken to Morocco and was brought by the Moors to Spain.

DISTRICT OF CHOLULA (PUEBLA), MEXICO

8

Detail of the Façade of the Church of San Francisco Acatepec Early Eighteenth Century

IN THE *Primeras Ordenanzas* of the Potters' Guild of Puebla, which were laid down in 1653, it was specified that fine pottery should be "painted in blue and finished in black with dots along the borders and edges". Thus the Mexican craftsmen continued the tradition of Talavera in Spain, which was the home of blue-figured maiolica. Many of the tiles on the façade of San Francisco Acatepec are painted in patterns of blue contrasting with white or yellow. Some of them have the simple stylized floral patterns which derive from Islamic tiles. Other floral tiles, like those at the base of the plinths and in the frieze, are clearly Chinese in inspiration, as is the lovely blue and yellow pattern of the shafts of the engaged columns. Chinese influence was widespread in Mexico

during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries because of the importation of oriental porcelains, fabrics, and papers through the Philippines. As a result the ceramists of Puebla evolved their own "Chinese style".

The tile panel of a lamb represents another aspect of Puebla ceramics, the painted figures which occur in single tiles as well as on vases, plates, and pitchers. In this case, and with the statue in its niche above, the derivation is purely European.

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MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Façade of the Sagrario of the Cathedral of Mexico

1749-1768

ANOTHER development of the baroque in Mexico and perhaps its greatest was the style that appeared in the capital in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was the culmination of all the baroque tendencies toward rich and unusual ornament, movement, and the dynamic play of light and shade. The style has been called "ultra-baroque" and, as Professor Kubler says, this "is an apt term for it expresses two ideas, that of a baroque style even more dynamic than its European predecessors of the seventeenth century, as well as the idea of an overseas style; America, indeed, was often described as the ultramarine domain of the Spanish crown."¹ To this may be added the fact that it differed so radically from the contemporary baroque of Spain that when an occasional monument like the sacristy of the Cartuja of Granada reflects its characteristics that building is considered to show Mexican influence.²

Lorenzo Rodríguez was the principal architect of the culminating phase of the Mexican baroque. The Sagrario³ which he built between 1749 and 1768 as an adjunct to the cathedral of Mexico is a Greek cross plan church with a central dome. Two façades, the east and south, are almost identically treated as outdoor retables according to an old Spanish tradition of façade decoration that goes back to the late Gothic period. It is within these retables that the style reveals itself.

The architecture of Lorenzo Rodríguez is difficult to describe. In it the basic architectural forms are so penetrated by an exuberance of decorative sculpture as almost to lose themselves in fantasy. Particularly is this true of the pilasters where a series of medallions and boxes and garlands occupying several planes are grafted onto the shafts to produce a multiplicity of contours and surfaces and patterns that are constantly modified as the light changes. In the baroque architecture of Spain and Mexico columns and pilasters had been richly decorated before but never, as now, in such a way that they became mere fragments, appearing, disappearing, and emerging again, in complete subordination to a dynamic plastic concept. The same is true of the entablatures, and the cornices are suppressed in favor of fragments of volutes and staccato parapets that produce the same

effect of prismatic movement and fantasy that the façade retables evoke. These short, broken, nervous lines, integrated in a rhythm so different from that of the graceful curves of the contemporary French and Italian rococo, are probably the essential feature of the style. Often the effect is heightened by a repetition in several places of these contours as in the frame of the small niche over the entrance door. It is not hard to find a resemblance between such twisting jagged lines and those in the illustrated manuscripts and architectural sculpture of the Aztecs.

The façades of the Sagrario, like those of the Santísima Trinidad in Mexico City (1755-1786) and the Jesuit church at Tepotzatlán (1760-1762), both probably by Lorenzo Rodríguez, convey to a large degree their effect of explosive exhilaration through the clarity and delicacy with which the façade sculpture was carved. Color also plays a part, especially at the Sagrario, where the gray-brown of the sculptured centerpieces contrasts with the warm rose tones of the local volcanic *tezontle* that forms the masonry of the lateral walls. Finally in all these buildings there is the traditional contrast between areas of concentrated ornament and surfaces without decoration which is a characteristic of Spanish architecture in each successive style.

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- ¹ KUBLER, GEORGE. Art and architecture of Mexico. In *New world guides to the Latin American republics* (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce), 1943, v. 1, Mexico, p. 28.
- ² For a discussion of the Spanish baroque see Schubert, Otto. *El barroco en España*, Madrid, Editorial Saturnino Calleja, 1924. The sacristy of the Cartuja is illustrated in figures 138 and 139.
- ³ The word *sagrario* refers to the part of a church where holy objects are kept. Actually the Sagrario Metropolitano is a regular parish church.

AT TEPOTZOTLÁN, about an hour's drive from Mexico City, the Jesuits between 1670 and 1682 built a great seminary for the training of priests. The adjacent church of San Francisco Xavier, like so many sixteenth and seventeenth century Mexican buildings, was redecorated in the eighteenth century. From 1760 to 1762 Lorenzo Rodríguez worked on the exterior, transforming the original façade, which must have been relatively sober, into an ultra-baroque retable façade similar to that of the Sagrario in Mexico City.

Ten years before, in 1750, the rector of Tepotzotlán, Father Pedro Reales, began the redecoration of the interior by ordering 11 handsome altars from a woodcarver of the capital who is thought to have been the famous Jerónimo de Balvás, whose retable in the Capilla de los Reyes of the cathedral of Mexico City (1737-1743) is very similar in style.

Two of the transept altars of Tepotzotlán dedicated to St. Ignatius Loyola and Our Lady of Sorrows are almost exactly alike. They represent in smaller scale the retable of the façade. Indeed, some believe that the architecture of Lorenzo Rodríguez and his contemporaries is an outgrowth of the development of the carved and gilded wooden altarpieces of church interiors. In the altar of San Ignacio we find the motives of the Sagrario repeated, the same columns interrupted by garlands, by portrait medallions and box-like decorations. Here are the same moldings, combining curves and sharp angles and the repetition

of lines to create an impression of greater movement. The altars of Tepotzotlán seem almost more exuberant and more richly decorated than the retables of Lorenzo Rodríguez, but they are just as wonderfully carved and subtly balanced as the great compositions of sculptured stone on the exteriors.

Professor Kubler has described such altars as those of Tepotzotlán in these words: "The wall is lost in a screen of gilded pedestals, shafts, moldings, and scrolls standing out in several planes of relief from a background which is like a golden cave of unknown depth and structure. . . . The gold leaf is sometimes burnished, sometimes dull, sometimes overlaid with other metallic colors, and its use is always calculated to impress the spectator with the sensation of a new kind of reality having nothing to do with the world outside the church; it is the atmosphere of ecstatic devotion and mystic rapture; the altar assaults the senses with its towering antigravitational masses, compelling the eye upward and driving the spectator's knees to the floor, inclosing him within an aura of gilded light and color. . . ." ¹

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*Cloister of the Former Monastery of San Agustín
Middle of the Eighteenth Century*

MEXICO is famous for the many private dwellings of the eighteenth century which it contains. They form the most imposing and original group of private houses erected in Latin America during the colonial period. One feature of these palaces is a large high entrance court with open, vaulted arcades in two stories. These eighteenth century courtyards are a monumental baroque version of the traditional patios of Spain and Mexico. Occasionally, as at the Colegio de las Nobles Vizcaínas¹ and what is now the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria in Mexico City, this secular courtyard was introduced without essential modification as the cloister of a religious establishment. Again at Querétaro in northern Mexico the Augustinians used the motive in the monastery they built there in the middle of the century. In its proportions and general arrangement the cloister of San Agustín at Querétaro is typical of these palace patios. Its decoration, however, is one of the most original expressions of Mexican colonial art.

In the Querétaro cloister the influence of the ultra-baroque innovators of Mexico City is felt, but only to a limited degree. The scalloped cornice and the deeply undercut molding of the arches provide a sense of movement and a vivid play of light and shadow. But the forms of this architecture are quieter than those in the buildings of the capital. There are no lines that wave, no violent alternation of curves and angles. The lower entablature continues practically without interruption, while the profiles and surfaces of the lower arcade have an almost Renaissance sobriety.

An extraordinary feature of the decoration at Querétaro is the use of Indian caryatides in place of engaged columns in both orders of the courtyard. Their plumed headdresses take the place of capitals. The bodies of the upper figures terminate in scrolls, while those below end in long tapering forms somewhat like a Gothic rib. The Indians of the upper tier wear feather skirts and their arms are raised in what appears to be a ceremonial gesture. At first glance these caryatides seem to be an indigenous contribution like the Indian heads of the sculpture at Tlalmanalco. But there is an important difference. The figures at Tlalmanalco were the product of Indian craftsmen still working in the Aztec tradition. In the two centuries that followed this tradition had been Europeanized. The Indians at Querétaro represent only the application of a native American motive to vary the decoration, like the corn and tobacco capitals in the Capitol at Washington. In their concept and in their execution these caryatides belong to international eighteenth century art. They are akin to those graceful Indians who on so many baroque vaults and stairs in Europe represent America as one of the four parts of the world.

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NOTE

¹The "Vizcaínas" is a great school built in the middle of the eighteenth century. The "Preparatoria" was founded by the Jesuits in 1749 as the Colegio de San Ildefonso. Its stairs and courtyards now contain frescoes by José Clemente Orozco and other contemporary Mexican painters.

"THE MARTYRDOM OF SAN PONCIANO" BY BALTASAR DE ECHAVE ORIO

12

Galerías de San Carlos, Mexico City
Early Seventeenth Century

OF ALL the colonial Mexican painters, at least 500 of whom have been identified in one way or another, the most distinguished group was at work in the first half of the seventeenth century. Their predecessors, like the anonymous master of Acolman, Juan Gerson and Simón Pereyns, had been minor European painters, of whom scanty record is left. Their followers began the decline which was to lead to the graceful but empty production of the eighteenth century. In the hands of a half dozen masters, the early seventeenth century Mexican school became the first center of baroque religious painting in America. It flowered at a time when the Spanish school was approaching its height, and before the full maturity of its nearest rival in America, the late seventeenth century school of Bogotá.

In the work of these three generations of Mexican painters there are a number of different European influences but no trace of the influence of America. First there is the Italian element, compounded of the last vestiges of Mannerist influence, the noble figures of the Caracci and the other Bolognese and the *tenebroso* style of Caravaggio. There is the Spanish element, in particular the influence of Ribera, Murillo and Zurbarán, many of whose canvases were exported to Mexico. Finally there are occasional indications of the grand manner of the Fleming Rubens, whose paintings were known at this time in New Spain through prints.

Baltasar de Echave Orio (1548-1620) is the father of Mexican seventeenth century painting as well as the founder of a dynasty of colonial artists.¹ He was born at Zumaya in the Basque region of Spain and married Isabel de Ibía in 1582 in Mexico. His career as an artist there seems to have begun in the 1590's. Until his death, which occurred sometime between 1619 and 1623, he painted large altarpieces of a peculiarly elegant grandeur.

The Martyrdom of San Ponciano, an early Roman saint, is typical of these altarpieces. It shows that Echave was a product of that sixteenth century Italian Mannerism which had flourished among the decorators of Philip II's Escorial.² The picture is composed on the well known Mannerist formula of intersecting diagonals, the torch of martyrdom touching the saint's side at exactly the point of intersection. The figures are arranged in the foreground, without any feeling of depth or space, as though they were portrayed upon a tapestry. From almost every angle outstretched arms repeat the same theatrical gestures and the characters are unrelated to the action of the scene. One executioner minces before the martyr and seems to snap his finger at him. Two witnesses turn languidly away. A cherub is lost in melancholy meditation. All these are characteristics of the art of the Italian Mannerists. The architecture of the background, a repetition of simple piers and arches, recalls Juan de Herrera and the Escorial.

In the lighting of the scene, where the figure of the saint stands out from a pervading darkness, there is an indication of the coming influence of Caravaggio's theatrical spot lighting on Mexican colonial painting.

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NOTES

¹ His son was the painter Baltasar de Echave Ibía, his grandson Baltasar de Echave Rioja (1632-1682).

² PELLEGRINO TIBALDI, FEDERIGO ZUCCARO, LUCA CAMBIASO.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST BY BALTASAR DE ECHAVE IBÍA

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Galerías de San Carlos, Mexico City
Early Seventeenth Century

BALTASAR DE ECHAVE IBÍA, like several of his contemporaries, studied with his father, Baltasar de Echave Orio. Nothing is known of his life except that he was active between 1620 and 1640, when he signed paintings that have survived. The little *St. John the Baptist with a Lamb*, one of the masterpieces of Mexican colonial art in the collection of the former Academy of Fine Arts of San Carlos, shows a more intimate and sensitive approach to religious painting than that of his father. The saint is represented alone, seated in an attractive conventional landscape meditating upon the mystery of the cross. There is nothing to identify the scene as American. As Gibson Danes has shown, the presentation is reminiscent of the Venetian Renaissance in the prominence given to the landscape, the use of a leaning tree behind the figure of St. John, and the choice of cool blues and greens as the principal tones of the painting. Echave Ibía must have known Venetian pictures in Mexico; there is evidence that some were there during his lifetime.

The *St. John* creates an impression of sincerity and of straightforwardness which is rare in Spanish American colonial painting and very different from the theatrical posturings of Echave Orio's grandiose martyrdom. In the drawing of the lamb and in the handling of the arm that holds the cross there is a degree of awkwardness that was to disappear from the artist's later work. But the modelling of the saint's head and the painting of the mountain behind it, in which the brushwork subtly enhances the blue impression of distance, leave no doubt that the long-neglected Baltasar de Echave Ibía was really one of the outstanding masters of Mexican seventeenth-century painting.

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ADORATION OF THE MAGI BY JOSÉ JUÁREZ

Galerías de San Carlos, Mexico City

1665

14

THE individualism and the Italianism of Echave Ibía were not part of the main stream of Mexican colonial painting. By the middle of the seventeenth century a handsome but impersonal adaptation of the Spanish style and in particular that of Andalusia had been evolved by the local painters, of whom José Juárez¹ was one of the most successful. He frequently blended elements from Sevillian painting, which he knew from imported canvases, with other motives and compositions from northern Europe which he must have learned through the medium of prints.² In all of his works there is a rich and urbane quality greatly admired at the time.

This is certainly true of his large altarpiece signed and dated in 1665 representing the Adoration of the Magi. The kings grouped in a circle around the central figures of the Virgin and Christ are ablaze with rich colors and jewels. Each holds an enormous carefully depicted golden container, one of which is overflowing with coins. The magus at the right, the only conspicuous example of awkward drawing in the picture, seems so pleased with his opulent costume that he looks away from the holy scene with an expression of superior satisfaction.³ These are the traits of a provincial painter fascinated by trivialities, but they also derive from that deep-seated Spanish fondness for magnificence which produced the gold-encrusted medieval altarpieces of Andalusia and Castile.

The painter's love of rich detail did not blind him to the problems of form and light, both of which are

interestingly handled in this picture. The seated Virgin and Child are a good example of baroque Spanish painting. The Christ derives directly from Francisco de Zurbarán, whose *Adoration of the Magi* in the museum of Grenoble, France, has an almost identical figure.⁴ The St. Joseph who stands before a tree looking with wonder at the oriental kings is a perfect Iberian type found among the peasants of Zurbarán. The head of the kneeling magus, however, recalls some massive saint by Rubens. The final note of eclecticism is provided by the murky black shadows that surround the figures, envelop the background of arid cliffs, and silhouette the Negro magus while other parts of the canvas are bathed in a warm, golden light. This is the kind of artificial lighting that Zurbarán gave his pictures, for that Spanish master, like Ribera was fond of painting his subjects in an open setting, yet with the dark theatrical shadows of Caravaggio.

NOTES

¹ His birth date is not known. In 1631 a son of his was baptized and in 1659 a daughter married the painter Antonio Rodríguez. Their sons, Juan Rodríguez Juárez (1675-1728) and Nicolás Rodríguez Juárez (1667-1734) were also painters. He is thought to have died in the late 1660's (Velázquez Chávez, Agustín. *Tres siglos de pintura colonial mexicana*. Mexico, Editorial Polis, 1939; 233-234).

² FERNÁNDEZ, JUSTINO. Rubens y José Juárez. In *Anales del Instituto de investigaciones estéticas* (México) 1943, v. 10: 51-57.

³ The face and costume of this figure are a kind of stock character in Spanish colonial painting. See the prophets of the Ecuadorean Gorívar (Navarro, José Gabriel. *La iglesia de la Compañía en Quito*. Madrid, A Marco, 1938; 134).

⁴ Reproduced: Kehr, Hugo Ludwig. Francisco de Zurbarán. München, H. Schmidt, 1918; figure 50.

PORTRAIT OF A MEXICAN NUN

Collection of Helena Rubinstein, New York City
Early Nineteenth Century

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THE best efforts of the colonial painters of Mexico and indeed of all Latin American painters were reserved for religious paintings. Their occasional portraits, although rarely of great artistic importance, are often especially interesting for the spectacular costumes of the sitters and the frequency with which objects of minor art are represented.

Most of these portraits represent Spanish officials and churchmen. There are a few noble ladies and some curious ceremonial portraits of nuns. It was customary in the colonial period and during the nineteenth century for Mexican girls, when taking the veil, to wear huge crowns of flowers and to carry long lighted tapers that were ornamented with blossoms and crowns. Of these Mme. Calderón de la Barca gives an animated description in one of her Mexican letters.¹

Frequently the nuns were painted as they appeared at the moment they took leave of the world.² The Dominican in this picture wears a crown of flowers and carries a taper with its blossoms. In addition she holds in her other hand as a symbol of her devotion a small image of Our Lord in His quality of Santo Niño, or Holy Child. The charm-

ing doll-like figure is dressed in the fashion of the French Directory, which helps to date the picture at the very end of the colonial period, and is itself surrounded by an aureole of pink blossoms. So rigidly are the flowers arranged and so conventionalized is the artist's drawing of them that they give the impression of being artificial. They make the nun seem more human and they also bring her portrait into the sphere of popular art.

Otherwise the painting is austere. The surfaces of grey, black, and white are flat and relatively unbroken except for the rosary which provides an attractive pattern on the stiff expanse of the long white habit. The face and hands of this unknown nun are slightly modelled but carefully drawn by a painter who was obviously trying his best to meet the requirements of a fixed convention. There is a close connection between such portraits as this and the work of our own colonial painters.

NOTES

¹ *Life in Mexico*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1843, v. 1: 294-307.

² For other portraits of Mexican nuns, see: Romero Flores, Jesús, *Iconografía colonial; retratos de personajes notables en la historia de México*, existentes en el Museo nacional. México, Museo nacional, 1939.

Façade of the Church of San Francisco

1641

THE Audiencia of Guatemala, comprising most of Central America, was after Mexico the most important theater of Spanish building in North America. Thomas Gage, who visited it in the seventeenth century, describes countless churches and monasteries of handsome architecture.¹ In Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador was developed what amounts to a local style of building.

The principal characteristic of this regional type is an exceptionally high façade, sometimes broad and sometimes narrow, which like a great screen hides the fabric of the church behind. The angle towers, such important elements in the colonial façades of Mexico, are often entirely suppressed. Sometimes, as at Panajachel, they are integrated into the front of the church. The construction was frequently of rubble, the surface being covered with plaster. In their present state many of the provincial church fronts are only shells, for they have lost all or most of their original decoration.

This is true of the church of San Francisco at Panajachel on the Lake of Atitlán in Guatemala.

Enough is preserved, however, to reveal still another characteristic of the style. That is the division of the façade into a series of square and rectangular compartments, each originally occupied by a niche containing a statue or a window. This geometric arrangement was used over and over in this region and had its best known expression in the cathedral of Antigua, Guatemala.

The Panajachel façade is another example of the influence of Juan de Herrera in America. The austere classicism of its forms shows that in certain places the spirit of the Escorial was still a force almost as late as the middle of the seventeenth century.

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¹ The English American, his travail by sea and land: or, A new survey of the West-Indies, containing a journal of three thousand and three hundred miles within the mainland of America. London, T. Routledge & sons, 1928.

ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

Courtyard of the Former University

Late Seventeenth Century

17

ANTIGUA, the old capital of Guatemala, was, before the earthquake of 1773 destroyed it, one of the handsomest and most comfortable cities of Spanish America. Among other institutions it supported a royal pontifical university, founded in 1678. The low university building, now a museum of colonial art, encloses a courtyard that is a fine example of the persistence of Moorish influence in the architecture of Spain and its colonies.

The polylobed profiles of the arches are the closest link between this broad patio and the Alhambra. But the very form of the courtyard is also Islamic with its cool, shadowy corridors, its sparkling fountain, and brilliant plaster-covered walls.

Curiously enough, however, the architectural orna-

ment is not so much Moorish as pure fantasy. Between the capital and the shaft of the pilasters there is a jagged section like an accordion or the bellows of a camera that contrasts effectively with the gracefully curving arches. On either side are angular pilaster strips as capricious as some of the ultra-baroque motives of Mexico. The paired volutes, which take the place of sculptured metopes in the frieze, are characteristic of Antigua. They form the pilasters of the towers of the church of the Merced.

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Façade of the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Merced

1760

THE churches of Antigua have in common with such buildings as that of San Francisco at Panajachel two essential characteristics. The first is the use of plaster-covered exterior walls instead of the fine cut stone of the principal colonial churches of Mexico. The second is the survival in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century façades of the compartmental scheme. Of the Antigua churches that of the Mercedarian order, built in 1760, is the only one which escaped serious damage in the disastrous earthquake of 1773. Its preservation was due in large measure to its low proportions and breadth and the stability of its ten-foot walls.

The façade of the Merced is completely covered with a variety of decorations in raised plaster painted white against a grey background. About the thick Doric columns of the lower order heavy vines are wound, thus producing an interesting relationship to the spiral shafts of the upper order and the twisted colonnettes of the entrance to the monastery nearby. The friezes are composed of interlacing patterns which in the upper section take the form of luxuriant palmetto branches. On the wall surfaces and in the

broad embrasure of the window, before which the statue of the Virgin is set, the intricate plaster ornament expands to include vases of flowers and men standing as though in a tapestry. Indeed, the effect of the decoration is that of a vast tropical wall hanging of shimmering whiteness. It can be considered an Indian influence on the regional architecture.

The feeling of movement the façade possesses is derived from this interlaced ornament and the curving profiles of the pedimental niche. The other architectural members are simple and rigid by comparison with the contemporary baroque of Mexico. But the ornamental forms that take the place of pilasters in the angle towers would indicate a provincial derivation from some of the innovations of Lorenzo Rodríguez and his associates were they not a long-established feature of the colonial architecture of Central America.

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Doorway of the Former Palace of the Inquisition

1706

CARTAGENA, which was founded in 1533, rapidly became one of the bastions of Spanish military and naval power in the new world as well as a great center of trade. The forts which guarded its harbor were constructed on such a scale as to dominate the city and to a certain degree they influenced its architecture. There is such a solidity and sternness about the old churches and public buildings of Cartagena and such a scarcity of decoration that they all have something of the character of military installations.

The palace of the Inquisition in Cartagena is one of the handsomest public buildings of the period preserved in South America. It was ordered by Philip III in the early seventeenth century but was not brought to completion until 1706. The principal element of the façade is an impressive doorway of local porous stone giving access to a large courtyard.

The architectural frame of pilasters and frieze is sober Renaissance design of a sort to be seen frequently in Mexico, for example in the lower order of the courtyard of San Agustín at Querétaro. Its effectiveness is here limited by the enormous height given the plinths, which make the composition slightly awkward. The pediment, which bears the royal arms carved by some provincial craftsman, is formed by two slightly curving members after the fashion of

a broken arch. The feeling of gently swaying movement that they produce is heightened by the notched profiles which are repeated in several planes, like the waving lines of Mexican baroque moldings. Within the pediment the royal arms are prominently displayed between two heavy volutes. An angular molding, which vaguely suggests a halberd, gives the whole doorway an arbitrary baroque silhouette.

Another important detail is the use of wood in the construction of screens (*rejas*) to cover the façade windows and balconies in the upper story of the palace. Hard tropical wood was preferred to iron because it would not rust.

Like the façade of the palace of the Inquisition in Cartagena, the colonial building of Colombia was solidly constructed and simply designed. In Colombia a conservative baroque prevailed, in which the influence of neither the Spaniard Churriguera¹ and his followers nor the Mexican innovators is greatly felt.

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NOTE

¹ JOSÉ CHURRIGUERA (1650-1723), an architect of Salamanca, and his followers built some of the most markedly baroque buildings in Spain. As a result their architecture is often called Churrigueresque.

Façade of the Church of San Francisco
Late Sixteenth Century

TOWARD the middle of the sixteenth century the Italian architects Jacopo Barozzi called Vignola and Giacomo della Porta employed a type of church façade which was to have the widest popularity throughout the Catholic world. It is especially associated with the church of the Gesù in Rome,¹ on which the two collaborated, and the Jesuit order which took the scheme from country to country. As a result this kind of façade is often spoken of as "the Jesuit façade".

It is a two story composition. The upper story, being narrower than the lower, is joined to it by gracefully curving members called volutes. Each story has an order of pilasters or engaged columns and the upper is surmounted by a prominent pediment, either circular or triangular in form.

In Spain Juan de Herrera soon made this innovation a characteristic of his style. He used the motive on the outer façade of the Escorial (1563-1580) and at the cathedral of Valladolid (1585), where he used pairs of engaged Doric columns in both stories. One of his followers, Gaspar Ordóñez, began in 1602 a church for the Jesuits at Alcalá de Henares in which coupled columns are again featured in a typical Jesuit type façade.² In this building and at the Escorial obelisks are employed as vertical accents of sober decoration.

So similar is the arrangement of the front of the Franciscan church in Quito with its "Jesuit façade", its coupled columns and its obelisks that an eminent authority on Ecuadorean art has suggested that the plans must have been prepared either by Juan de Herrera or one of his pupils.³ We know that an Alonso Rodríguez, who was born in Quito helped build the church, but who really designed the façade is still a mystery. Certainly the similarities with the buildings of Herrera would indicate a Spanish author as would also the two towers which dominate the façade. Such towers were not generally used in

Italy but on the other hand became very popular in Spain after they were introduced by Herrera with the "Jesuit façade" in his plan for the cathedral of Valladolid. Those of San Francisco were rebuilt after an earthquake in the nineteenth century.

Beside these Spanish characteristics should be noted the strong Italian flavor of the rustication which is the principal decoration of the façade of the Franciscan church in Quito. Rustication, or accenting of masonry, was very popular in Italy during the sixteenth century, where it was employed in varying degrees and different combinations to produce rich surface patterns. As such, it was a step in the evolution of the baroque. Occasionally, as here in Quito, courses of masonry would be raised above the others and allowed to pass over and "enrich" pilasters and columns, like hoops around a barrel. It is interesting to note that an identical treatment was given the portal of a palace in Bologna attributed to Vignola himself.⁴ Rustication was rarely used at this time in Spain.

Thus the Franciscan façade in its composition and in its decoration combines both Spanish and Italian elements. The former gave it dignity, like that of the cathedral at Puebla; the latter gave it animation. This combination occurs in many of the colonial buildings of Quito, where architecture in general remained much more traditionally European than in Mexico, which developed its own interpretations of the baroque, or in Peru and Bolivia, where Indian elements were so abundantly interwoven.

NOTES

¹ Illustrated in Ricci, Corrado, *L'architecture italienne au XVI^e siècle*. Paris, Hachette, 1923; 132.

² These three Spanish buildings are illustrated in Schubert, Otto, *El barroco en España*. Madrid, Editorial Saturnino Calleja, 1924; figs. 18 and 33, and 88-89.

³ Navarro, José Gabriel, Summary of ten lectures on Ecuadorean art. Panama, Centro de estudios pedagógicos e hispano americanos, 1935, v. 9: 13.

⁴ Illustrated in Ricci, *op. cit.*: 145.

Façade of the Jesuit Church

1722-1765

THE Jesuit church of Quito ranks with that of the Franciscan as one of the handsomest monuments of colonial religious art in South America. The building was begun in 1605 on plans by Brother Gil de Madrigal and by 1689 all but the façade had been completed. It follows the usual Roman Jesuit plan of a broad barrel-vaulted nave with a row of communicating chapels on either side. The interior is covered with complicated gilded carving, the motives of which seem to be derived from Moorish designs.

But it is the exterior of the church which is entitled to a special position in the history of Latin American colonial art. This is because of the use of three twisted or Solomonic columns on either side of the doorway and for the lavish decoration on the upper pilasters, within the friezes and around the doorways and niches. The inspiration for this kind of decoration comes from late seventeenth century churches in Italy and Spain. The twisted columns, whose rippling contours contribute movement to the center of the façade, are derived from one of the supreme monuments of baroque art, the baldachin of St. Peter's in Rome. The arrangement of the broad façade in two tiers with groups of pilasters and columns and gracefully curving volutes conforms to the Jesuit scheme that was used at San Francisco. But between the two façades there is all the difference that almost a century of baroque development implies.

The plain surfaces of the one are ornamented in the other. The vigorous lines of the older façade are broken and softened by decoration in the newer. We have only to compare the unadorned parapet of San Francisco with the elaborate ornaments of that of the Jesuit church to understand the difference. The same is true of the volutes of the two monuments. This rich surface decoration in the church of the Jesuits does not, however, reach the extreme development of the Mexican ultra-baroque style. The upper pilasters are covered with ornament but they do not in the process of decoration lose their basic forms as do the corresponding members of the Mexican Sagrario or the altars of Tepotzotlán.

This façade, like most of the architecture of Quito, continues the traditions of Europe without American innovation. According to a tablet in the church, Father Leonardo Deubler, whose name indicates that he was a German Jesuit, carved the great columns and the busts of the apostles between 1722 and 1725. The work was resumed in 1760 by Father Venancio Gandolfi of Mantua and completed in 1765.

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Façade of the Palace of the Marquesses de Torre Tagle

1730-1735

LIMA, the capital of the viceroyalty of Peru, was, like Mexico City, a center for new development of the baroque style. In these places more than anywhere else the imported Spanish style was absorbed and then reinterpreted in a highly original fashion. In neither case did indigenous influences play an important part. The motives with which the architects worked were almost entirely Iberian and the way to the conclusions they reached had already been prepared by Spanish craftsmen. They merely carried further tendencies already established. In both Mexico and Lima these inventions reached their height at the middle of the eighteenth century.

The doorway of the palace which Don José de Tagle-Bracho y Pérez de la Riva built in 1730 to celebrate his elevation to the rank of marquis shows the principal innovation which Lima produced in the Spanish baroque. This consists of adding to doors and windows huge curving members of tremendous projection with heavy angular contours. To appreciate their effect we can compare the Torre Tagle door with that of the palace in Cartagena, where the design of two curving members to frame the door in place of an arch is basically the same.

The two doorways are to one another as high relief is to low relief. The great projection of the Lima arrangement creates a new spatial element which is emphatically baroque. The gentle movement of the Cartagena door becomes explosive in the Torre Tagle palace. In spite of the great weight of this superstructure the Lima door does not seem overbalanced. By a nice calculation of accents and bal-

ance of solids with voids the whole composition holds together and almost seems to soar. In its suggestion of movement, use of space, contrast of light and shade for dramatic effect, and originality of design, the Lima door is in every way more baroque than that at Cartagena. The principle that it demonstrates was applied over and over again in the colonial churches and houses of Lima.

On the architrave of the Torre Tagle door and over the window above it an elaborate interlaced design in low relief not unlike that of the Jesuit church at Quito or the Merced of Antigua is spread. The effect of this design is like the Moorish *lacerías* of Spain. The same thing is true of the projecting balconies of tropical woods with their shuttered and latticed openings, which give an oriental air of seclusion to the house. These Moorish balconies, characteristic of colonial Lima, were also used in Brazil.

The Islamic note is continued in the polylobed arches of the broad courtyard, in the carved ceilings and the tiles of this extraordinarily well preserved colonial residence, which is now the ministry of foreign relations of Peru.

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Façade of the Church of San Agustín
Circa 1730

ANOTHER contribution of the school of Lima to what might be called the American baroque is a distinctive type of church façade in which a statue in a central niche dominates the whole arrangement. This type of façade which had been used in other places, like Antigua, was so frequently employed in Lima and in so special a way that it is primarily associated with the churches of that city.

Like the great eighteenth century designs of Mexico, the Lima façade is based on the principle of an outdoor retablo, whose elaborate decoration contrasts dramatically with severely bare flanking walls. But whereas the Mexican façades, like that of the Sagrario, are an almost uninterrupted field for continuous, small scale, shallow ornament, such a typical Lima façade as that of San Agustín is broken into a series of large compartments, each with a deep niche and definite architectural enframements.

Thus the difference becomes a difference of depth and division. The niches of the Sagrario are so shallow that their statues project and appear to merge with the figures on columns and in medallions about them while the frames of the niches converge with the other ornament. At San Agustín the niches are important deep accents in the design. Six of them are dominated by a master niche which is like a small

stage upon which the large and realistic figure of a saint appears. So deep is this opening that the statue stands out against a dark background that seems to lead into the church like the door and window above and below it. Each niche is an architectural unit and the statues are isolated in space within them.

The architectural ornament used in Lima was different from that of the ultra-baroque churches of Mexico. The heavy spirally ornamented column is a principal element of decoration in place of the columnar fantasies of Mexico and Guatemala. At San Agustín the column is covered with a characteristic grape vine motive, and both the column and the motive are repeated constantly in the many compartments of the façade. Heavy baroque ornament is applied to the intervening surfaces. The weighty cornices and frames of Lima architecture over the door, the segments of a heavily adorned arch that resemble the decoration of the Torre Tagle door, and a band of running spirals and volutes at the edges of the composition, intensify the impression of massive sumptuousness that the façade of San Agustín conveys.

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AREQUIPA, PERU

Façade of the Jesuit Church

1698

24

IN SOUTHERN PERU during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at Arequipa and around the Lake of Titicaca, local baroque architecture was Indianized. The influence of Indian craftsmanship and indigenous motives on the architectural sculpture of sixteenth century Mexico, and later in the plaster decorations of Guatemala had been an occasional influence, appearing here and there in scattered monuments, never dominating a single building.

In Peru, however, decoration that is Indian in technique and representation frequently took possession of a whole façade and so pervaded it that only the basic architectural forms remain European. Although the subject has never been carefully studied, it appears that nowhere were Indian craftsmen given such freedom of expression as in the region of southern Peru and Bolivia.

A fine example of this Indianism is the façade of the Jesuit church of Arequipa, on which the date 1698 is conspicuously inscribed. The frame of the façade is the Jesuit type with coupled engaged columns, which had been used at the Franciscan church in Quito. A conspicuous window niche provides a central accent distinctly more sober in outline than the sinuously curving pediment, which resembles a Moorish polylobed arch.

Around these members and almost enveloping them is spread a tapestry of low relief sculpture which in general recalls the front of the Mercedarian church in Antigua. It blankets the flat surface of the walls, invades the shafts and capitals of the column, fills the frieze, alters the entablatures, penetrates the finials and pediments, and finally erupts in a heavy mat around the whole façade.

The flatly carved, rather coarse sculpture provides a whole new vocabulary of baroque ornament, in which the spiral vine and the scrolled volute leaf play the leading roles. Indian heads appear, tropical flowers, conventionalized angels with waving arms, vases of flowers, the Inca sun and moon, and the double headed eagle of the Hapsburgs. The decoration is so crowded that the surface is like a honeycomb. It remains fixed, without the usual baroque flow of movement. Rather each block of sculpture is a center of movement of its own and each counter-checks its neighbor, thus producing a feeling of arrested motion which is intensified by the general flatness of the relief.

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Detail of the Façade of the Church of San Lorenzo

1728-1744

IN THE colonial period Bolivia was for a long time a part of the viceroyalty of Peru. Stylistically its architecture often shows the influence of the Indianized baroque of the Peruvian Andes. Particularly is this true of the city of Potosí, where spectacular wealth from silver mines brought a great architectural development in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The church of San Lorenzo in Potosí has a façade which has been called the most original in America. Certainly it stands beside the Jesuit church of Arequipa in its use of Indian motives to produce an unusual design of surpassing richness.

The façade, on which are inscribed the dates of execution, 1728 to 1744, is set, according to a local custom, under a projecting barrel vault. The Argentine critic Ángel Guido has attributed it to an Indian craftsman, José Kondori, but the reasons for his attribution are not clear.¹ The façade is smaller than the principal Peruvian examples of the style. It consists of a single arch flanked by engaged spiral columns terminating in richly clad Indian figures, which function as caryatides. In this they recall the statues of the upper order in the Querétaro courtyard but their features and composition are Indian, not European. These "Indiatides" support an entablature above which is a figure of the Archangel Michael standing within an arch very much like the deep niches of the Lima churches. Lateral strips of ornament carry further the resemblance to the style of Peru.

A detail of the upper portion of the façade shows clearly the very Indian features and technique of this statue of St. Michael. It is complemented by the figures in the relief above it, representing St. Lawrence with his gridiron and that other deacon saint, St. Stephen. They are supported by what amounts to caricatures of flying angels. Two other awkward Indian angels are fastened to spiral columns like those below. As in the Peruvian examples the whole façade is embellished with sumptuous vegetable pat-

terns after the fashion of a rug. Besides the St. Michael are vases of flowers, another Peruvian motive. Spirals and volutes again form a principal part of the ornament. In one place they are combined with torch-like finials that recall the earlier Jesuit church in Arequipa. At the top of the façade they take on a form that resembles an animated turtle.

A special feature of San Lorenzo in Potosí are the realistic reliefs that occupy the upper wall surface, like the backdrop of a stage. The stars of heaven are represented with the sun and moon. Although it has been explained that their presence indicates the influence of Inca sun worship, it can be argued that the sun and moon are also Christian symbols for they often appear in scenes of the Crucifixion, as in the fresco at Acolman. Distinctly un-Christian, however, are the two sirens playing Indian guitars. They are a favorite convention of colonial sculptors of southern Peru,² and can only be accounted for as strange intrusions of some popular but baffling Indian cult.

Apart from its unusual decoration, the portal of San Lorenzo is basically conservative baroque. Its arrangement is more akin to the Spanish style of the seventeenth century than to that of the eighteenth.

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¹ GUIDO, ÁNGEL. El espíritu de la emancipación americana en un artista indio de Potosí. In *Prensa* (Buenos Aires) Jan. 1, 1932; section 3, 1 p.

² HARTH-TERRÉ, EMILIO. La sirena en la arquitectura virreinal. In *Arquitecto peruano* (Lima) May 1940, v. 4, no. 34: 3.

TRINIDAD, PARAGUAY

Ruins of a Jesuit Mission

1745

IN PARAGUAY and in territories which are now part of Argentina and Brazil the Jesuits built and maintained before their expulsion in 1767 no less than 48 mission centers for converting and instructing the Guaraní Indians. Each was a complete town oriented about a broad central square, which contained the churches and houses of the Jesuits, the shops and schools. In regular streets around this square were the homes of the Indians who were taught among other things architecture, painting, sculpture, and the making of church furniture. Their Jesuit teachers were Italian, German and Spanish priests who before coming to America had been trained as architects and sculptors in Europe.

The most distinguished of these men was an Italian, Juan Bautista Prímoli (1673-1747), who began his career in 1718 at Córdoba, in Argentina, a great center of Jesuit building. There he began the cathedral and worked with such energy upon a number of church constructions that the bishop called him "architect, contractor, and mason all in one". In Buenos Aires Prímoli continued to build churches with another Jesuit, Andrés Blanqui. The characteristics of his style are handsome proportions, relatively simple surfaces, and a new respect for the classic forms of architectural decoration. In his work can be felt the first slight tendency in Spanish America to react against the liberty and lavishness of the baroque tradition.

This ruined church at Trinidad is one of three great constructions Prímoli carried out for his order. Its most interesting features are a sculptured doorway

and the large roughly oval panels of masonry that flank it.

The doorway is another notable example of how in widely separated parts of Spanish America conventional European architecture was frequently given an American interpretation. It would be impossible to find another like it in Spain or Italy. The opening is dwarfed by the great reliefs that are placed over it. First there is an attic holding a composition of leaves and a cherub's head. Above this is set a handsome urn which seems to spout fire and which is framed by broad swags of drapery and coarse jungle leaves, the counterpart in stone of the tropical vegetation around the ruined structure. In the selection and execution of these motives we can see again the hand of the Indian. But here his influence is confined to an isolated decoration; it does not dominate the building, as in Bolivia and Peru. The composition is, however, so unlike the rest of Prímoli's work that it is hard to believe he was the author of this detail of the church. The doorway at Trinidad is notable for the use of masonry without mortar and the way in which the relief sculpture was carved from large stone blocks which are fitted together to form the walls of the structure. It was not inserted, as is generally the case in baroque architecture, but is an essential part of the construction.

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Façade of the Cabildo

1725-1765. *From a Watercolor by Carlos Enrique Pellegrini in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires*

THE colonial architecture of the region of the Rio de la Plata is very different from that of Mexico and the west coast of South America, and, to a certain degree, from that of the interior of Argentina. The baroque stopped, so to speak with the Andes, and in place of the great piles of sculptured masonry and the rich façades of Peru and Mexico, the cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo present a group of small, almost undecorated eighteenth century buildings, whose charm resides in nice proportions and the pattern of sharp profiles against unbroken surfaces. In this respect they are not unrelated to the colonial structures of Brazil.

The Cabildo, or town hall, of Buenos Aires, is one of the oldest of these buildings. Begun in 1725 on plans of either the Jesuit J. B. Prímoli or the military engineer Captain Domingo Petrarca, it was not completed until the conclusion of its tower in 1765. During the nineteenth century it suffered a sad fate. In 1879 the architect Benoit changed the roof, altered the façade and enlarged the tower. Ten years later the cutting of a new avenue made it necessary to decapitate the tower and remove three bays at the right end of the façade. The last three at the left were also destroyed in 1913. What remained has recently been carefully restored by the Argentine government.

The original appearance of the Cabildo of Buenos Aires is best preserved in this watercolor by Pellegrini painted in 1829, one year after his arrival in Argentina from France. It shows the long façade of eleven bays

arcaded in both stories, the continuous iron balcony, the central member with its colossal pilasters balancing those at the angles. Behind the bulging pediment, which is the only really baroque part of the architecture, rises a tower as bare as the rest of the building.

The style of the Cabildo is like that of the Spanish missions in California. Both are representative of an undercurrent of what might be called utilitarian architecture that ran through the whole colonial period. They are the kind of structures of simple but solid construction that military engineers put up in frontier communities or where great local wealth did not demand a more ambitious undertaking.

The loggia form used at Buenos Aires, which derives from Italian civic architecture, and ultimately from Roman, was the most popular façade arrangement for colonial town halls in Latin America. It was used in the Cabildos of Salta, Santa Fe and Luján in Argentina, in several of the old towns of the state of Baía in Brazil, and reached its grandest expression in the town hall (1754) and palace of the captains general (1763) in Antigua, Guatemala.

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House of the Iron Windows
Second Half of the Eighteenth Century

VENEZUELA, like the Rio de la Plata, was another of the minor theatres of colonial Spanish American architecture. The earliest buildings of importance were coastal fortresses designed by Spanish engineers to protect the trade routes of the Indies. Their influence was never entirely outgrown. It is as though subsequent architects remained faithful to the military background of the sixteenth century, so sober and so solid were their constructions. In this respect the Spanish cities of the Caribbean, in Cuba, Colombia, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, are alike. The full current of the baroque escaped them all.

Occasionally in the small coastal towns of Venezuela there are houses and churches with highly original plaster decorations. They are a kind of folk architecture. One of the most unusual is the doorway of the House of the Iron Windows¹ at Coro built in the second half of the eighteenth century for Don José Garcés y Colina. He is thought to have designed it himself.

The house is low and the doorway dominates the whole façade. Around it are set as ornaments eight curious engaged columns, the shafts of which taper outward only to be pinched in severely just above the bases. Some of them look like candles in diminutive holders. It has been suggested that they were designed in imitation of the growth of a local tree,

the *ceiba*. Columns of this sort occur in the late Renaissance prints and paintings of Germany and the Low Countries. In this respect it is worth remembering that some of the earliest settlers of the region were colonists from Augsburg in southern Germany.

It is the play of light and shade on the plaster surfaces that distinguishes this little façade and make it appealing. The deep shadows of the columns and the designs around the door contrast with the narrower outlines of the moldings and the fan, and they in turn stand out against the soft lines of the patterns that were drawn on the wet surface of the plaster. The whole façade is like a highly modelled piece of pottery in the sunlight. Although not closely related to the development of formal Venezuelan architecture, the design is essentially baroque in the freedom with which the architectural forms are presented and the dynamic spirit with which it is infused.

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NOTE

¹This name is derived from the fact that in the coastal towns of Venezuela, as at Cartagena, wood *rejas* are much more common than those of iron.

Courtyard of the Former Government Palace

1776-1792

DURING his administration between 1771 and 1776 the Spanish governor Marqués de la Torre set out to modernize the city of Havana and to provide it with certain civic improvements which it had not possessed, among them a theater and a formal promenade. He was responsible for the erection of two of the finest eighteenth century public buildings in America, the post office (Casa de Correos) of 1770 to 1773 and the government palace, now the city hall or Ayuntamiento of 1776 to 1792. Both represent the beginning of the neo-classic trend in Latin American architecture. They are products of that change in taste which took place at the court of Charles III of Spain,¹ a change from the exuberant originality of the baroque to a revived interest in the quiet elegance of the Renaissance, and a new desire to imitate the forms of Graeco-Roman architecture. The buildings in Havana are a foretaste of the tremendous movement which at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries was to change the current of Latin American architecture and redecorate so many baroque buildings in neo-classic form.

Unfortunately in neither case is the name of the architect known. Plans for the post office were prepared in Madrid and carried out by an engineer of Havana, Antonio Fernández Trevejos. Those for the palace, closely related to the nearby Casa de Correos, are thought to have been made in Cuba. They were approved by the military engineer, Brigadier Silvestre Abarca, and the execution was supervised by Fernández Trevejos.

The long two-story façade of the government palace has an arcade in the lower story which recalls the Buenos Aires Cabildo, but resembles more closely the handsome town hall of New Orleans. Unlike the Cabildo of Buenos Aires, the Cuban structure is of fine

masonry. Its cornice originally ran in an unbroken line across the whole façade² giving it that air of tranquility which the neo-classic architects of Spain and Italy desired. The only baroque feature of the façade are the twisted frames of the windows, which are not unrelated to those of the cathedral of Havana.³

This spirit of restraint is emphasized by the great interior courtyard, one of the most distinguished eighteenth century monuments in America. Again the arrangement is in two stories of arcades carried on simple Roman Doric columns, like those of the façade. The proportions of both orders are nicely related to the spacious area they surround and enhance the impression of official dignity which the palace conveys. The only element of decoration in the scheme is the series of ornamental Ionic capitals that descend from the cornices with an originality that faintly recalls the baroque. But the distance the courtyard has travelled from the real baroque is at once apparent if we compare it with the patios of the former Augustinian house in Querétaro and the old university of Guatemala. It was fitting that Havana with its long tradition of sober military architecture, in which effectively the spirit of Juan de Herrera had endured, should be the cradle in America of the new style.

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¹ Charles III, while king of Naples (1734-1759), had taken a personal interest in the excavation of Herculaneum and had encouraged his architects, one of whom was Luigi Vanvitelli, to develop a new style based on Roman models.

² The frontispiece containing a clock was added in the nineteenth century.

³ The cathedral, formerly the church of the Jesuits, was completed about 1773.

SANTIAGO, CHILE

Façade of the Casa de la Moneda 1788-1805

30

DON AGUSTÍN JAUREGUI Y ALDECOA, governor of the captaincy general of Chile from 1775 to 1780, sought and obtained aid from Madrid to construct a number of the public buildings and churches of Santiago which had been destroyed by earthquake in 1730 and never replaced. His experience differed from that of the Marqués de la Torre in Havana, for this time an architect was sent out from Spain to undertake the work in person. His arrival in 1780 marks the beginning in Chile of an enduring tradition of monumental architecture¹ and coincides with the activity in Mexico of another Spanish architect Manuel Tolsá and of the Portuguese Brigadier José Custodio de Sá e Faria in Brazil.

This architect, Joaquín Toesca y Richi (1745-1799), was, like his master, Francesco Sabatini (1722-1797), an Italian who had come to Spain with Charles III. Both Toesca and Sabatini had inherited the style of that great architect of Naples, Luigi Vanvitelli (1700-1773), who was the real forerunner in Italy of neoclassicism. This was the style favored by the Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, which, after its foundation in Madrid in 1752, came to have great influence on the official architecture of Spanish America.

Shortly after he reached Santiago, Toesca submitted plans for a large new building to house the royal mint. He designed it on a scale to rival the handsome palace of the mint at Potosí in Bolivia, which had been completed in 1773, and to represent with proper dignity this important function of the Spanish crown. His plans were approved in 1782 and after a delay characteristic of colonial building work was begun six years later. The palace was not completed until 1805. It is now the official residence of the presidents of Chile.

The Casa de la Moneda is constructed on a rectangular plan occupying a city block. For its size it is low, presenting a real second story only in that part of the façade which houses the entrance. This single portal leads through a narrow passage to a courtyard flanked by two others smaller in scale. From this first central court a still narrower passage leads to the real heart of the building, another large open space into which projects a wing of the building. The palace is constructed of brick covered with stucco.

Inside there are a few details of carved stone, such as fountains and stairs, to enrich the extreme simplicity of appearance.²

Toesca's style is new in that he excluded all the usual Renaissance and baroque elements of decoration to reveal the functional frame. It is as though he had stripped the façade to its skeleton. By so doing he went a step further than the architects of the Cuban buildings, for the doors and windows in Santiago have perfectly simple curved or rectilinear frames. There is only the slight break in the pediment to remind us of the style that had gone before.

In reality Toesca's design closely approaches the old manner of Juan de Herrera. The mint recalls in particular one of that sixteenth century architect's most successful buildings, the Lonja of Seville, completed in 1598.³ Here are the same long two-story façades, the same Doric pilasters on high bases separating the walls into rigid panels with mathematical regularity. The palace at Santiago is even more austere, for it lacks even the huge obelisks that ornament the balustrade of the Lonja. In the course of almost 300 years Spanish American architecture had turned full circle and at the close of the eighteenth century it found itself even more a thing of straight lines and bare surfaces than at the end of the sixteenth, when the cathedrals of Mexico were beginning to be constructed.

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NOTES

¹ Previous building had been sporadic and modest. The elaborate plans of the German Jesuit Father Haymhausen had not materialized before the expulsion of the order in 1767 (Benavides Rodríguez, Alfredo, *La arquitectura en el virreinato del Perú y en la capitania general de Chile*. Santiago, Ediciones Ercilla, 1941: 227-234).

² The great stone target with the royal arms carved by the colonial sculptor Ignacio Andía y Varela (1757-1822) has been removed from the entrance.

³ Now the Archivo de Indias. Reproduced in Schubert, Otto, *Historia del barroco en España*. Madrid, Editorial Saturniño Calleja, 1924, fig. 32.

CAP-HAÏTIEN, HAITI

The Church of Notre-Dame

1748-1771

(From an engraving in Ponce, Nicolas, *Recueil des vues des lieux principaux de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1791)

THIS is the original design for the principal church of Haiti when that republic was still the French colony of Saint-Domingue. The façade, as the engraver has preserved it, is as far from the spirit of the baroque as the courtyard of the city hall in Havana or the palace of the mint in Santiago de Chile. In all three buildings straight lines, restrained ornament, and a feeling of repose have taken the place of exuberant movement.

But although the Spanish buildings represent a reaction from the baroque style, the church in Haiti is an outgrowth of a tradition which had developed without interruption in France. In the seventeenth century the French had never yielded to the spell of the baroque in exterior architecture as the other Latin nations had done. Their profound respect for reason and order kept them from doing so. As a result the façades of the seventeenth and eighteenth century churches of Paris, if not their interiors, differ little from the Renaissance canons of the sixteenth century Italians. The design for the façade of Notre-Dame at Cap-Haïtien is therefore basically the same as the one François Mansart had applied almost a hundred years before to the lower part of St. François des Minimes in Paris.¹

31

The Haitian façade, as shown in the engraving, is closely related to that of the Franciscan church in Quito. But the French example of Vignola's influence seems more rigid and static than the Spanish. A second story screen, repeating the straight lines of the pilasters and columns below, diminishes the sense of movement expressed in the circular pediment and almost obliterates the curving volutes. This is a familiar French arrangement which, with variations, was used in Quebec and in Louisiana.

The building, which was dedicated in 1771, replaced five previous churches. It in turn was destroyed by earthquake in 1842 and has since been reconstructed on different lines. The church was designed and built by Rabié, a military engineer stationed in Haiti.²

NOTES

¹ This church, completed in 1679, was destroyed about 1795 (see Blomfield, Reginald. A history of French architecture from the reign of Charles VIII till the death of Mazarini. London, G. Bell and sons, 1911, v. 2: 128-129). It was engraved for Jean Mariette's great book, *L'architecture française* (Ré-impression de l'édition originale de 1727. Paris, F. Vanocet, 1927, v. 1: 16) and this may have been the source for the inspiration of the church of Cap-Haïtien. By omitting a base and placing incorrectly the triglyphs of the lower frieze, the architect has impaired the elegance of his design.

² MOREAU DE SAINT-MÉRY, MÉDÉRIC-LOUIS-ÉLIE. *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, Philadelphie, Chez l'auteur, 1797-1798, v. 1: 337.

SALVADOR, BAÍA, BRAZIL

Cloister of the Franciscan Monastery

1738-1749

32

THE colonial architecture of Brazil is Portuguese rather than Spanish and most of it dates from the eighteenth century. In general, units of building and design were smaller and sometimes less formal than in Spanish America and there was almost no indigenous influence in construction or ornamentation. The development of architectural styles was the same, however, but tardier than in the Spanish colonies, for the Portuguese counterpart of the severe style of Juan de Herrera prevailed until the early eighteenth century and the spirit of the baroque lingered almost until after independence in 1821.

One of the most important early eighteenth century constructions of Baía, the old capital of Brazil, is the church and monastery of São Francisco (1686-1750), the exterior of which has the mathematical symmetry of a design by Herrera, while the interior is an outstanding example of all-over baroque decoration. The large and handsome cloister, constructed of local cream colored stone between 1738 and 1749, presents some of the principal characteristics of Brazilian colonial architecture.

The cloister follows the usual two-story plan. There is an arcade, then a parapet, on which rests a colonnade carrying a sloping roof. The arrangement, in its striking simplicity, recalls the architecture of fifteenth and early sixteenth century Italy. There is nothing baroque about it, except perhaps the very restrained raised triangular panels in the spandrels of the arches. The small Doric columns of the upper story, whose compressed solidity is almost Romanesque, are an important feature of Luso-Brazilian rural building. Their relation to the architecture suggests the special kind of church porches

which the Portuguese brought with them to Brazil and there applied also to the verandas of plantation houses. The cloister therefore bears the closest relation to the regional style. Its influence was felt in a whole series of similar cloisters in Franciscan monasteries of the northeast of Brazil.

Around the walls of the Baía cloister, both inside and out, are compositions of tiles, some of which came as a royal gift from Lisbon in 1745. Painted blue and white and glazed after the fashion of those of Delft, these tiles were one of the principal Portuguese decorative industries. Their animated figures and gracefully curving frames present a curious contrast with the architecture, while their light blue tonality relieves the monotony of the white walls and provides an agreeable transition to the soft red tiles of the roof. The Portuguese tiles in Brazil are almost always blue and form figure compositions and naturalistic landscapes. Those of Mexico were produced in a variety of colors and like their Moorish models were generally decorated as units of a geometric pattern.

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High Altar of the Church of São Francisco
Early Eighteenth Century

THE richly decorated interior of the church of São Francisco in Baía offers a decided contrast to the sober rectilinearity of the façade and indeed of the whole exterior. When the building was begun in 1708 the severe Herrerian style of architecture was still in vogue but the use of baroque ornament in interior wood carving was as well developed as in the Spanish colonies. In general the same decorative vocabulary was used and the twisted columns, the pendent garlands, volutes, and flying cherubs were covered with a thick coating of Brazilian gold.

There are several differences, however, between these church interiors of Brazil and those of Mexico and Peru. The first is a difference of scale. The Spanish American interiors are generally larger, and their naves are loftier, so that the individual ornament of altarpieces seems smaller than in Brazilian churches. In Mexico and in the other Spanish colonies elaborately carved and gilded retables were set against relatively bare walls. The tendency in Brazil as in Portugal in the early eighteenth century was to make them part of a continuous decoration, a sheath of woodcarving that covered the whole interior. As a result, the effect of single retables was less dramatic but the total impression was often of a more overwhelming richness than in Spanish America. Furthermore, in such an interior as that of the Franciscan church of Baía, the basic architectural form of the nave and chancel are carefully preserved in relation to the sculptural decoration, which does not dominate the structural lines of the building as it does in the ultra-baroque architecture of Mexico. Spatially, therefore, the concept is more Renaissance than baroque. The sculpture is overlaid but not in-

fused with the result that the interior, in spite of its lavish covering of decoration, maintains a rigid, box-like appearance.

All the Brazilian eighteenth century churches follow the Portuguese custom of giving great attention to the chancel, or *capela-mor*. Sometimes it occupies a third of the ground plan and the apse is invariably square. The high altar is arranged in a series of diminishing stages on the top of which stands a votive statue. This "throne" of the altar can thus be converted into a pyramid of lighted candles on great occasions and takes the place of the conventional painted altarpiece.

The *capela-mor* of São Francisco in Baía was probably constructed about 1723, when the main fabric of the church was finished, but its decoration was prolonged for several decades. The pavement of inlaid Portuguese marble was not installed until 1740, when the coffered barrel vault was gilded. Some of the wood carving may have been done by Brother Luis de Jesus, who completed the handsome furniture for the sacristy in 1714, and who later made the choir rail. The statue on the high altar, which represents St. Francis embracing Our Lord, is the work of a modern sculptor of Baía, Pedro Ferreira.

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Façade of the Church of São Francisco

1765-1794

THE most interesting development of baroque architecture in Brazil occurred in the mountainous inland region of Minas Gerais. There at the beginning of the eighteenth century gold had been found and in the mining towns which rapidly came into being a series of churches was built with three original features. These are the use of round, oval, and octagonal façade towers; curving ground plans; and delicately sculptured portals.

The principal architect and sculptor of colonial Minas Gerais was Antônio Francisco Lisboa (1730-1814), called Aleijadinho, or the Little Cripple, because, according to a legend, his hands were maimed. He executed the doorway, the pulpits, and the sacristy sculpture of the church of the Third Order of St. Francis and to him the plan of the building has been attributed.

The church derives from the local architecture of Portugal in its use of exterior plaster surfaces with simple stone trim, a square apse and extended chancel, and the general design of the façade. But the round form of the towers and their interesting relationship to the curved front of the church as well as

the details of the carved doorway and the sculptured medallion that penetrates the cornice are Brazilian innovations.

The portal is one of the outstanding achievements of Aleijadinho's career. Carved from soft soapstone, it is in certain respects the Brazilian equivalent of the Mexican ultra-baroque style, especially in its repetition of wave-like profiles and the interruption of the shafts of the pilasters. But the slighter proportions of the motives, the more delicate treatment of the details, and more restricted use of planes separate it unmistakably from the Mexican decoration. Like the façade of the Sagrario in Mexico City, the doorway of the Franciscan church at Ouro Preto is a distinctly American achievement. It is the more remarkable because no one yet has been able to explain how Aleijadinho, working in such a remote region, was able to evolve so brilliant and original a style.

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Detail of the Door of the Church of Nossa Senhora do Carmo

1772-1780

THE church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Ouro Preto, designed by Aleijadinho's father, Manuel Francisco Lisbôa, resembles that of São Francisco. This church, which was begun in 1766, has rounded towers, a convex façade, and a sculptured door designed along the same lines as that of São Francisco. The books of the Third Order of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, which built the church, show that the contract for the sculpture was let in 1771 to Francisco Lima, a master stone worker, but the great similarity of the delicately carved figures with those by Aleijadinho suggests that Antônio Francisco Lisbôa may really have designed the portal. Lima received his first payment in 1772 and his last in 1780, by which time the work had probably been completed.

The subject of the sculpture, like that at São Francisco or the closely related portals of the churches of the Franciscan and Carmelite Third Orders in São João d'El-Rei, is one of sacred heraldry. There is a target with the arms of the Virgin, in this case the symbols of the Carmelite order. Her crest is the head of an angel which is surmounted by the crown of

the Queen of Heaven and two flying cherubs serve as supporters. The shield is set against a bed of flowers and what may be either drapery or vegetation in such violent agitation as to suggest the beating of wings. Throughout this composition, the pilasters and architectural fragments and the other delicate ornaments are clearly derived from French rococo designs while the cherubs have the sleek bodies and elegant airiness of the cupids of Boucher. The strong French imprint is much more characteristic of eighteenth century Brazilian art than that of Spanish America, and was transmitted by way of Portugal where during the reigns of D. João V and D. José (1707-1777) there was a tremendous fashion for the things of France.

The frame of the door is carved from local Itacolúmi stone; the ornamental details are of the blue-grey soapstone of Minas Gerais.

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Façade of the Town Hall

Circa 1756

THOSE who know the provincial architecture of the north of Portugal recognize the town hall of Mariana as one of its purest reflections in America. The façade is as Portuguese as the altar arrangement of São Francisco at Baía, and as typical of its tradition as the Buenos Aires Cabildo was of that of Spain.

The construction is of the common Portuguese type, stucco with stone trim (sometimes in Minas Gerais the more readily available wood was used in place of the stone). Pilasters, and the other formal

architectural members are reduced to a minimum. The doorway is a series of panels, flares, and delicate rococo ornament. The gracefully sloping roof, which is a prominent feature in the design, again suggests French influence. There is a double exterior stair, like those used so frequently in Portugal, which, more than anything else, is responsible for the impression of lightness and gaiety the building evokes and for the picturesqueness which separates it from the more formal architecture of Spain and Spanish America.

THE first Brazilian landscapes were painted by Dutchmen at Pernambuco in the seventeenth century. In 1630 the army of the Dutch West Indies Company had taken this territory from the Portuguese. The Dutch held it until 1654. During this period their governor, the humanist Johan Maurits, Count of Nassau-Siegen, built the city of Recife and employed Dutch artists to record it and the surrounding countryside. One of these painters Frans Post of Leyden (1612-1680) made scores of landscapes of the region which had a great vogue in Europe. Some of them, exhibited at Versailles, inspired Gobelins tapestries.¹ He also illustrated the official account of Dutch administration in northern Brazil.²

The Detroit picture is typical of the landscapes Post painted after his return to Holland in 1644 for it contains one of the elaborate borders of tropical plants and creatures which he added for his European patrons as a catalogue of the wonders of the region. In it can be seen the *dendezeiro*, or oil palm, the tropical fruit trees, the brilliant flamboyants and flowering vines. There is an armadillo, a monkey, a cobra killing a hare and a quantity of other reptiles. Beyond this rich framework a party of Pernambucan gentlemen and their Negro servants is visiting a partially ruined church. This, it has been suggested, is the old Jesuit church at Olinda, a

town near Recife, which the Dutch largely destroyed when they captured it. A path leads on to a house and some farm building, while in the far distance a river and the coastal swamps can be seen. The ruined church is a good example of Portuguese Renaissance building, little of which has survived in Brazil. The porch is a characteristic feature, but the vault, which the ruins reveal, was a rare occurrence in early Brazilian architecture.

The landscape is lightly painted in oil on canvas. The outlines are softened, as in most of Post's later works, and a blue haze hangs over the background. The subdued tones of the foliage in the border intensify the brightness of the central scene just as the darkened wings of a stage make the lighted portion more brilliant.

Another of Post's Pernambucan landscapes is in the Oliveira Lima collection of the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

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THE VIRGIN AND CHILD. DRAWING BY GREGORIO VÁSQUEZ DE ARCE Y CEBALLOS

38

Museo de Arte Colonial, Bogotá, Columbia

Early Eighteenth Century

GREGORIO VÁSQUEZ de Arce y Ceballos (1638-1711), the principal colonial painter of Colombia, like most of his contemporaries, was trained in America and never went to Europe. He based his style on canvases imported from Spain and Italy or on engravings that he saw in Bogotá. We know from records that he copied paintings by Murillo and Ribera, Guido Reni, Sassoferrato and Rubens. He has left a drawing of Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair*. The fact that it is in reverse indicates that in making it he worked from a print.

Drawings by the colonial painters of Latin America are extremely rare. A whole sketchbook, like the one by Gregorio Vásquez preserved at the colonial museum in Bogotá, is practically unique. Some of the drawings are studies for paintings; one is dated 1704. All of the sketches are done in ink with a quill pen. The strokes are of uneven thickness, the lines frequently break and are sometimes re-

peated. There is no shading and backgrounds are seldom indicated. The draughtsmanship of Gregorio Vásquez is, in comparison with the best European standards, both hesitant and uncertain but there is an Italianate gentleness and a straightforwardness about these sketches, like the drawing of the Virgin and Child, that reveals the painter's character.

This is the kind of work that was produced in various centers of seventeenth century Spanish American painting, at Lima, where a number of minor Italian masters joined the local school, at Quito, where Miguel de Santiago and his pupil, Goríbar, painted whole series of religious pictures for the churches and convents, and at Bogotá where the Figueroa family formed an artistic dynasty like that of the Echaves in Mexico.

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THE VIRGIN SURROUNDED BY ANGELS AND A DONOR

39

International Business Machines Corporation, New York
Seventeenth or Eighteenth Century

THE Indian influence that is felt so keenly in some of the architecture and sculpture of Peru is also found in Peruvian painting. Although the subject has not been thoroughly studied,¹ it appears that Indianizing painting was not produced at Lima so much as in certain provincial centers, of which Cuzco seems to have been especially important. There in the old Inca capital richly dressed Indians who can be identified as descendants of the Incas appear in a number of paintings. Cuzco is known to have been the seat of a great export trade in devotional pictures to the other Spanish colonies of South America.

This painting of the Virgin, which came from Cuzco, is characteristic of the style, which, if less spectacular than that of the architects of Arequipa and Potosí, reveals just as clearly the influence of Indian taste and craftsmanship. The principal characteristic of the picture is the flatness of the figures. The Virgin, who is as monumental and expressionless as a Byzantine Mother of God, dominates the canvas. The schematized modelling of Her face and hands is reduced to a minimum. The heavy mass of the hair and the rich robes fall without a ripple to break their symmetry. She, like the angels and the praying donor is portrayed without emotion, wonderful and silent, without a spark of that humanizing spirit of European baroque painting that brings the holy figures into such close relationship with the spectator.

The magnificence of the costumes, like the involved sculpture of the Arequipa churches, is another Indian characteristic. The artist has depicted the Virgin's huge crown with an infinity of small twisted ornaments, again like the sculpture at Arequipa. She wears a triple golden chain, a girdle, a necklace with a cross, and enormous jewelled earrings. Similar ornaments are scattered arbitrarily through the Virgin's hair and over the robes of the angels. Applied in a thick crust of gold, so that they stand out from the surface of the canvas, these ornaments contribute greatly to the sumptuousness and the unrealness of the painting. American, they contrast with the European fabric of Our Lady's robe, a gold brocade, with lively birds of the type seen in the fourteenth century Italian fabrics.

Finally, the faces of the figures are Indian. They all have the same large stylized up-turned eyes, high flat brows, and full lips that can be seen in the contemporary architectural sculpture. Turned toward the Virgin, they see Her, but in their meditation they look beyond, like the divinities of pre-Columbian or oriental art.

The Brooklyn Museum has a notable collection of this kind of Peruvian painting.

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HEAD OF A SPANISH SAINT

Cathedral Museum, Mexico D. F.
Seventeenth Century

40

ONE of the principal aims of the baroque was to simulate nature in its most dramatic and expressive forms. To achieve their effects the Iberian sculptors of the seventeenth century found polychrome wood an ideal medium. They preferred light cedar wood which was easily carved. This was then covered with a thin even coat of plaster or gesso and the surfaces naturalistically painted. Such Spanish masters as Alonso Cano and Pedro de Mena were imitated in all the American colonies, but with particular success in Quito, Antigua, and Mexico. To make these figures more realistic actual clothing was often provided and real hair and other human features were added. In remote areas, like New Mexico¹ and northern Argentina, these properties were used to cover up crude gestures and awkward modelling produced by limited craftsmanship. Every colonial church possessed these moving, realistic figures. They are displayed either singly in niches and on platforms or in groups upon the great retables, like those at Tepotzotlán. Some statutes, to which miraculous powers are attributed, still attract throngs of pilgrims each year and on special occasions are carried in procession through the streets. More than anything else this polychrome wood sculpture is the symbol of Latin American colonial art.

This almost life-size head of a mystic saint, variously identified as St. John of God, St. James of

Alcalá, or St. Peter of Alcántara, is one of the most striking products of the Mexican school. The anonymous sculptor has shown the saint in a spiritual ecstasy. His emaciated head is thrown back, his eyes with real lashes gaze upward, as though to behold a vision. His gaping mouth, his sunken cheeks, and the swollen veins of his throat are a triumph of naturalistic carving. Dramatic shadows make the face more haggard, the suffering more intense. In all the torment of mystical striving the saint seems to cry with St. John of the Cross:

"When, oh my beloved Saviour, when,
When shall I be in such great glory?
When shall I know when?
When, rising from this earthly meanness,
Shall I attain that greatest victory?"

(Ansia el alma estar con Cristo)

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VIRGIN OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York

Seventeenth Century

41

THE large statues made for churches and convents represent one aspect of Latin American colonial wood sculpture. Equally important was the production of small devotional images for the private chapel, the bedside niche, the travelling altar, the outdoor shrines, and the Christmas *crèche*. These were made according to the same technique and in the same workshops as the larger figures.

The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, so frequently represented in Spanish baroque painting, was one of the most popular themes for small statues. The example from Guatemala in the Brooklyn Museum has a number of interesting features. The face and hands are of ivory instead of wood. The proper symbols of the globe, the serpent, and the new moon are omitted and the Virgin stands on a heavy base of gilded wood broadly carved in a series of swirling baroque curves. Instead of the usual flowing windswept drapery Our Lady wears a stiff and heavy costume that is made to flare outward

in the shape of her symbol, the moon. It recalls the voluminous travelling dress of ladies of the period.

This figure of the Virgin is as pretty and mundane as the Mexican saint is unworldly and austere. She smiles discreetly and holds her hands in a delicate gesture of prayer. The voluminous robe, through which a burnished undercoating is here and there apparent, has a handsome pattern of gold leaves on a red background. The hood and the mantle, which covers the back of the figure and appears at the sides, have gold flowers upon a blue ground. Her crown is of delicately wrought silver. The slightly Indian flavor of the Virgin's features and the two dimensional quality of the sculpture produced by the flat treatment of the costume suggest indigenous influence. Less apparent than in the Cuzco Virgin, these indications recall the minor but distinctive role that Indianism played in the colonial architecture of Antigua.

CHOIRSTALLS FROM THE MONASTERY OF SAN FRANCISCO, LIMA, PERU

42

Hispanic Society of America, New York

Circa 1630

THE furniture made for the homes and churches of Latin America in the sixteenth and seventeenth century is dominated by the principles of Renaissance architecture. Proportions are grand, the basic pattern is rectilinear, and details of the classical orders are used as the most frequent source of decoration in combination with low relief carvings of drapery, masks, flowers, and vines. This decoration, which is the outgrowth, or, as it were, purification of plateresque ornament, is nowhere more conspicuous than in the handsome series of choirstalls and sacristy presses made in the seventeenth century for the cathedrals and monastic churches of Peru and Mexico.

The stalls at the Hispanic Society are 3 of the 130 made in the second quarter of the seventeenth century for the monastery of San Francisco in Lima, which cost, according to Father Cobo, the chronicler, 43,000 pesos, or 5,000 more than those which Pedro Noguera undertook in 1622 for the cathedral.² In design they are related to the latter, but the ornament is simpler and more refined, and the sculptured figures are less dramatic.

These three seats from the upper tier are a unit. Carved of mahogany and cedar the choir stalls have as their principal ornament three Franciscan saints, the prettiness of whose poses has almost an early fifteenth century Florentine flavor. The modelling is simple and direct, the drapery falls in a few expressive folds. These figures are separated not by colonettes, as is generally the case, but by high relief female figures whose bodies terminate in husks. The cornice above is broken by large shells from which peer the smiling faces of angels.

These choirstalls, less advanced toward the baroque than those of the cathedrals of Lima and Mexico, are one of the purest expressions of the Renaissance in America.

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DETAIL OF A CARVED BEDSTEAD

Museu Nacional de Belas Artes

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Circa 1740

43

THE intricate curves and flowing lines of this Brazilian bed are characteristic of the change which came over Latin American furniture in the eighteenth century. Under the influence of French Regency and Louis XV decoration, Spanish and Portuguese craftsmen and their colonial counterparts abandoned the heavy frames and straight lines that hitherto they had used. Most of their ideas they derived from France, but other details came from Italy and from the English styles of Queen Anne and Chippendale. They worked in an international vocabulary, which, closely related to the sculpture, architecture, and painting of the time, can best be called rococo. In spite of their constant borrowing, however, the eighteenth century Portuguese and Brazilian cabinet-makers produced furniture of a distinctly national character, which for want of a better name is called D. João V after the monarch who reigned in Portugal from 1706 to 1749.

One of its distinctive elements is the use of Brazilian *jacarandá*, a wood so dark and lustrous that it can only be compared with rosewood and *lignum vitae*. Another was the use of leather stamped according to the Spanish technique, almost as dark and lustrous as the wood itself, for the seats and backs of chairs. Here it is used to cover the horizontal frame of the bed. Posts were often abandoned in favor of a drapery attached to the wall and foot boards were frequently suppressed.

These modifications of the seventeenth century type enhanced the importance of the headboard which became a subtly mobile design of flowing curves based on the forms of shells and beans and leaves. Solid panels alternate with open areas. Vibrant outlines culminate in a flaring crest of twisting ornament which spreads over the whole surface in graceful lines of low relief called "spiders" that join one group of decoration with another. This carving is closely related to the wooden altar pieces of Brazilian churches and particularly resembles the soapstone portals of Minas Gerais.

Such a bed as this Arthur Costigan saw in Portugal in the house of the Marquis of Pancorvo. It had "crimson damask curtains, bordered with broad gold lace: a magnificent Chinese coverlid, richly embroidered in gold and silver, with Chinese figures . . . was spread over the bed; the sheets were edged with fine broad thread lace, and the bed pillows were ornamented with the same . . ." (Sketches of society and manners in Portugal. London, T. Vernor, 1787, v. 2: 371-377).

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